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없는

회귀

Possessing Nothing

– 쥐뿔도 없는 회귀 –

- Part 2 -

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목마

Chapter 26

The Mountain of Mush (1)

Everything occurred as Sungmin remembered.

After half a year, the old surgeon that did martial skeleton surgery had died. He was killed a third rate martial artist that wasn't able to get the surgery.

Usually conflicts between otherworlders didn't go to punishments, but it was different if it involved a citizen. The lord had punished the martial artist. The punishment was death.

He knew of the surgeon's death. That's how he died before.

But he didn't stop it. There was no reason to stop the death. His sense of justice was always different. If there was a relationship between him and the man, he might have tried to block the death.

But there were none. Even if he had gotten the surgery, it was just coincidence. The old man wanted to perform a successful surgery on a person. He wanted to get a martial skeleton.

To be honest, he didn't want to be involved in it.

After he died, time passed. He stayed in the inn, and if he was lacking in money, he went out to hunt goblins, orcs, etc. He sold the spoils to Hans. That money was spent on his inn fees or savings.

Wijihoyun had left.

There was no more teachings. He had to wait 10 more years since that happened. Well, if he didn't die before that.

It was obvious, but he had no intention of dying.

There was a tournament that occurred in Genavis. It was like a game for the citizens

that had to go through summonings, and it was also a test for the otherworlders. That wasn't all. Usually there were different prizes depending on the tournament, but usually they were helping in surviving as a otherworlder. It was like a fair payment to the people who gave the citizens enjoyment.

There were three groups. One allowed magic. The other one didn't allow magic. And the last one was the No Class Fight.

He was that.

Winning was easy.

Since Wijihoyun left, he had spent his time practicing the Amethyst Cloud. There were no sort of goals in his past life like this, but now was different. He had to defeat Wijihoyun and had to spend this much work.

'Not just her.'

He looked at his gloves.

The No Class tournament was way easier than he expected and almost made him think his preparations were a waste of time. But that was to be expected.

The No Classes in the fight were just that level. They were the ones getting hunted by third rates. The strong ones in Genavis wasn't that strong as well anyway

But how was he. He had the two grace techniques and was taught by the genius Wijihoyun. He had also gotten some inner strength from her as well.

The experience from his past life covered his lack of basics, and he was close to being first rate. It was true that he lacked the inner strength though.

'It would be solved somewhat by the potion.'

He had fought 5 times and won all of them. He didn't use his full strength. He thought there wasn't really a good reason to.

"Drink it here."

A man was waiting in the contestant room. He was a knight held by the lord.

“If you take it outside, there might be problems. It’s generosity from the lord so thank him.”

“...I will.”

“If you don’t want to drink it and sell it, tell me. I can exchange it to gold. Even if you don’t have any cultivation methods, it would still help you so don’t worry about that.”

There was no reason to sell it. He would get a lot of money, but he didn’t need money. Portions weren’t that easy to buy anyway.

Could he trust him... was not a question that he had to think about. A No Class in his past life got the potion and got help from it.

‘Thinking about it, what happened to that guy.’

The one who got the potion in his past life. Thinking about it, the person who should have gotten didn’t because of Sungmin.

‘It’s not my problem.’

He opened the wooden box. There was a white colored potion inside. As he picked up the potion, the knight went close to the door. He wanted to provide defense.

He put the potion in his mouth. The potion melted as it touched his tongue. It wasn’t delicious. There really wasn’t any flavor.

Sungmin slowly used the Amethyst Cloud. The inner strength in his body was welcoming the strength from the potion. He would swirl the inner strength of the potion in his body. He couldn’t take all of the power. The potion was after the stage of refinement, but not all the energy could be collected.

Usually about a half could be collected. The other energy was either excreted or split in the bloodstream...

But the Amethyst Cloud was a great technique. When he had finished the process, he had collected almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of the inner strength given by the potion. The other $\frac{1}{3}$ also melted inside the blood stream. It was the same for Wjihoyun’s inner strength. The Amethyst Cloud would slowly move the inner strength towards Sungmin’s abdomen where his power stayed.

“Are you done?”

When Sungmin opened his eyes, the knight asked. Sungmin breathed lightly and lifted himself.

“Yes. Thank you.”

His body was filled with power. It was something he had never felt before.

“Your martial arts power. It’s pretty good. How is it? I could ask the lord to make you an apprentice knight if you wanted.”

The knight asked. To the knight, Sungmin was probably a genius in his eyes.

“Ah... thank you for the offer... but no thank you. I have to do other things.”

“Ah, that’s too bad.”

The knight was a bit sad at that, but he didn’t ask any more. To be honest, it was good offer. Anyone could be a mercenary, but not anyone could be a knight.

But he didn’t linger on it. He went outside the waiting room.

He was leaving Genavis. There was no change in plans.

“I wanted to say bye.”

There wasn’t a place he wasn’t going to leave without saying bye. He had leaved for a year. There were a few relationships.

“I thought so.”

First, Hans. He was a person that gave him great deals. He had sold things in fair prices, and he had also given him a interdimensional pocket.

“I heard that you would won the No Class Fight. To be fair, I thought you would have left earlier. You finished cleaning up the woods in half a year.”

Hans laughed. Even though Han’s generosity was from mistaking Sungmin’s talent, Sungmin still felt glad to Hans.

“Probably for you, you’ll be all right anywhere you go. You have good sense.”

Like me. Hans laughed showing his teeth. He pulled out a small bag from his pocket and tossed it to Sungmin.

“Take it.”

“...It’s a interdimensional pocket?”

Sungmin made a surprised face, but he caught the pocket.

“It’s used. It’s better than what you have. About 1.5 times the power. It’ll be useful for you.”

“...Why?”

“It’s a present. Take it. I’m going to be in Genavis for a while. If you want to repay me, send me something.”

Ahns laughed. Sungmin stared at Hans and bowed.

“Thank you.”

“What thanks. I wanted to give you it... While you’re at it. Get famous. So I can hear what you’re up to. Brag about it. That you’ve gotten help from Hans in Genavis.”

“Yes.”

He bowed and went to Jack’s inn.

“You’re leaving?”

Lula asked when he went inside. Sungmin froze and asked.

“How did you know?”

“Your room is clean. You folded the blankets, and cleaned the room. Why? I could have done that.”

Lula was sitting on the table with pouty lips.

“It’s not surprising. You’ve stayed for a year. I know. Usually the otherworlders, they all leave.”

“...Yeah. I have to leave.”

“You don’t have any plans on working at our inn?”

Lula asked.

“My dad. He really likes you. You’re young and diligent. Yeah. Your dad might give you the inn when he retires.”

“Why to me? He has you.”

“You idiot.”

Lula’s arms shivered at Sungmin’s innocent answer. He knew what she was talking about, but he didn’t ask. That was right.

“Don’t die.”

Lula pouted.

“If you’re leaving, stay alive. Don’t die. Don’t do too much. If you can’t, just come back.”

“...Yeah. Thanks.”

“You aren’t though, are you?”

Lula went outside the table. She looked at Sungmin. The 15-16 year old girl’s eyes were calm compared to her age.

“Probably.”

“I thought so. Don’t come back ever. You idiot.”

Lula spat and turned around quickly. As she was going in the kitchen, she stopped once. Then she turned around again.

“But don’t die. This is for real.”

“I don’t.”

“Hmph!”

Lula snorted loudly. Then she went inside the kitchen.

“She’s too young. Yes. You’re younger though.”

Hans walked out as Lula went inside the kitchen. He held a basket.

“Sometimes I feel like you look way older than your age.”

“...I can’t help it. Living makes you that way.”

“Someone would think you lived a decade more.”

Hans laughed. He gave the basket he was holding to Sungmin.

“A hungry journey is hard. Bread rots easily but not in the pocket. Take it with you. I put you some milk as well. I think you like it.”

“...Thank you.”

He didn’t really like it. It was just good for his health.

“And take this. It was a cape from my younger days... it has magic on it. Pointy knives don’t stick easily and it has temperature maintaining magic. But it’s not that great of a magic. It doesn’t keep the temperature if it’s too cold or hot.”

Even if it was used, a cape with magic would be expensive. He put the basket in the interdimensional pocket, and put the cape around him.

“...It’s too big...”

“You’re fit when you get older.”

Jack said with an apathetic face. He tapped Sungmin’s shoulder.

“Still though, you’re one of the best No Classes I’ve met since working at the inn. You’ll live pretty well in other places as well.”

“Thank you.”

“Nah. It’s the truth. If you have time, come back and show me your face. After my daughter gets married.”

Jack laughed showing off his teeth.

“DAD!”

Lula shouted loudly in the kitchen. She was listening even though she was acting like she wasn’t. Jack jumped slightly and whispered.

“Or not. Hmm! Come back quickly and...”

“SHUT UP DAD!”

Lula’s shout turned into a scream. Sungmin smiled bitterly and nodded.

“I’ll think about it.”

Even if he wouldn’t.

He left the inn. It was July. The year 1104. It was a year since he arrived.

The cape was a bit big, but he liked it. He rolled up the upper half of the cape so the end of the cape wouldn’t drag on the floor, and walked towards north castle wall.

‘3 years in his past life. Now it’s one year.’

He had graduated 2 years quicker.

Chapter 27

The Mountain of Mush (2)

He did graduate 2 years earlier, but there was an issue.

His age was 15. He became a mercenary at 17 in the city close to Genavis called Behengeru.

He did survive for 3 years in Genavis. There weren't any great prizes to be had in Genavis. It was time to leave.

But was there a reason to go straight to Behengeru?

'No.'

He didn't know what happened in Behengeru for the next two years. Everything that he wanted or missed was 2 years in the future. The things that he never got or wanted were things that occurred when he was a mercenary.

Therefore, he didn't have any memory of the things happening for the next 2 years.

Pak!

Sungmin's spear broke an orc's head. He swiftly stabbed three more times and broke three more heads.

'First rate...'

The limit that he had never gotten in his past life. He was about there because of the power of Wijihoyun and the potion plus the grace techniques.

But it wasn't enough.

A half a year ago when he dueled against Wijihoyun, he was in the middle of second rate and first rate.

But he didn't manage to even hit the clothes of Wijihoyun. She wasn't old at 13, but she already had the power of a master. The apex rate and the first rate. The difference was like heaven and earth.

'Because of the fast growth rate of No Classes and martial skeleton, the martial techniques can get stronger quickly. The problem... '

It was Sungmin himself. His [Amethyst Cloud] level was 2 while the High Heavens was level 3. It was because of the martial skeleton and the fast growth rate of No Classes that he managed to get it this high. He would still be at level 1 struggling if it weren't for them.'

He could increase the power of the technique. But it was Sungmin who was using them. The person who was making the decision, the person moving his body, the person deciding on his action, that person was Lee Sungmin.

'I need time.'

There was no reason to go straight to Behengeru. Even if he did become a mercenary, the only things that he would be doing is getting requests from guilds and training and earning money.

Instead of that, he needed time to train.

He stopped his footsteps. If he crossed the forest, he would be at Behengeru. He turned his head.

He saw a mountain.



"It's been awhile since such a young person had come here.'

Mush was a God in Eria that symbolized training and penance. This place, Mountain of Mush, was a place where the servants of Mush lived. It was near Geanvis and Behengeru.

"Is age an issue?"

Sungmin asked. It took him 4 days even he went the closest way. His body which hasn't

been washed in 4 days was dirty and smelly.

“No, age doesn’t matter. Suffering hardships and penance is for everyone.”

The priest who answered had dead eyes and his cheeks sunken. He smiled at Sungmin.

“Do you know about this mountain?”

“A bit.”

The trainees were protected by Mush. The trainees can not inflict harm on each other. If they were to, they would be stopped by Mush. That is because the hardships and penance that Mush stands for is only for oneself.

“Would you like to get a penalty?”

The priest asked. Sungmin stared at the priest. In the 4 days on the way here, he thought about what penalties he would take.

“Taste.”

Sungmin pointed to his mouth.

“Also, I would like to take a penalty on the weight i feel.”

“I see.”

The priest nodded. He didn’t use magic or pray. He only moved back a few steps and opened the way to Sungmin.

“We won’t give you anything. You will eat, drink, sleep... living is on your own. Young trainee.”

Sungmin didn’t answer and moved past him.

He had heard about this place before, but never actually been here. There was no reason to.

The Mountain of Mush. Everything was up to the person. He could be wasting time or could even be losing things. Usually, it was the person’s life. Mush didn’t allow others

to harm others, and didn't care about the trainees dying alone.

But there was a reward after suffering. Seeing what penalties the trainee took, the hardships and sufferings would be more intense, and if the person passed it, Mush would give an reward.

Sungmin wanted that. It would be hard to reach the limit with the same method as other who had more talent than him. Therefore, he came here.

As he passed the temple.

[I welcome you.]

A voice passed through Sungmin's ear. Sungmin let out a sound without even knowing.

His body was heavy.

It was hard for him to even move a step. Sungmin bit his lips. He had gotten a penalty on his weight. Not only his body, but everything would be heavier to Sungmin.

'My taste... '

He had no taste in his lips. Sungmin pulled out his pocket. It was heavy. The bread that he pulled... felt like rocks. Sungmin stared at it and opened his mouth.

Bak.

It felt like he was eating stone. No, this was... Sungmin wrinkled his face. He didn't lose his taste. Just everything that he tasted, the taste changed. It felt like he was chewing dirt, and the bread wriggled like a corpse of a bug. The taste became worse and worse as he chewed.

"Ugkkk!"

Sungmin couldn't swallow the bread. He thought that he had been pretty masterful at eating terrible food, but this wasn't something that he could eat in his normal mind. Sungmin spit out his bread and retched a few times.

"HCK... Huhh...!"

After a while, Sungmin pulled out the water bottle from his pocket quickly. As he tried to pour the water inside his mouth to clean the taste away.

“Ckdf!”

It wasn't just the food. The water... changed. It felt like dirty water. Sungmin bit his teeth. Taste and Weight. He didn't think it wouldn't be that hard. If he had to choose which one would be harder, he would have chosen the weight.

No.

The strongest penalty that he had gotten was the lack of taste.

He wanted to give up.

Was there a reason to continue. If he could have gone to Behengeru, he would have been a D rank mercenary. If he did a few request, he would be a C rank, and his growth would continue. Therefore, he would be expected to become a first rate soon.

If he became a first rate, then he could become a B rank. That would be better than his previous life. The opportunity that he missed before? What was that. He had already surpassed his previous self, and gotten the first step to a better life.

Not too much greed... just live. With the flow. Goal? Living happily. Isn't that good enough? He could get money by mercenary work. He wouldn't have to do the hard work if it seemed to dangerous. Then he would get a nice girl and marry, have kids, then live long.

Isn't that a great life. That's normal, but having a normal life as a No Class in this world was hard. Yes... he could live like that and be happy.

He didn't need to have any greed.

He could just leave.

Go to Behengeru. There was no reason to suffer. The food that he would eat would be hell. His body would be heavy and he wouldn't be able to use his martial arts. Even if he lived like that, he didn't know what Mush would give him. He could waste his time here. He could kill himself being depressed about his lack of talent.

Let's give up.

When he thought about that.

Sungmin thought about Wijihoyun.

His first teacher, and only friend. The promise that he made to meet in 10 years.

Sungmin pulled out the bread from his pocket. He wrinkled his eyes and pushed the bread inside his mouth. His body had already remembered the bread's disgusting taste. His body had already rejected the bread as it came in. His stomach was dying. He chewed the bread. He forced himself, repeatedly, to chew up the wriggling worms that were inside his mouth. His taste completely changed. The worms blew up with secretions and the secretions scratched his mouth.

His cheek blew up strongly. He shivered slightly as he poured the water inside his mouth. The water... was hot. As it went inside his mouth, the water turned boiling hot. Sungmin forced himself to drink it up.

"HG! Hg!"

He thought he had suffered a burn. His mouth was bitter and burning. But when he checked, there was no burn marks. It was only in Sungmin's mind.

"Idiot... Mush..."

Even if Sungmin had wanted this penalty, he didn't know it would be this bad. Sungmin cursed repeatedly at Mush.

[Rude Human.]

Mush whispered in Sungmin's ear.

Apparently, this god had really good ears.

Chapter 28

The Mountain of Mush (3)

Mush.

The god of suffering and penance. The person who wants something after hardships, go to the Mountain of Mush. It was up to the freedom of the trainee for what penalty he or she wanted. Some didn't take any penalties, while some did.

But the result was the same. With or without penalty, Mush brought hardships to the trainees and the trainees would suffer through them.

There were 3 ends.

Give up and leave.

Win and take the reward.

Fail to survive and die.

Every day was hell.

Sungmin opened his eyes. His body was heavy. He had slept a long time... but his mind was heavy as well. It made a sense of tiredness. Sungmin's heaviness was pertaining to his mind as well.

"F*ck."

His curses were getting better. If he didn't curse, he felt that his terrible state wouldn't get better. As a hardship, he thought that Mush would give the hardships.

But no, didn't the priest say to Sungmin before coming here. They will give nothing, no food, no drinks, no shelter.

That is true. Surviving in this mountain itself was a hardship. It was... cruelty. Too cold at night and too hot in the day. He did get the cape from Jack, but it did nothing to help

him from the cruel hot and cold of the mountain.

Sungmin wrinkled his face and opened his pocket. He still had enough bread and water. But he couldn't survive with just that.

Sungmin was going to live in this mountain for 2 more years. The trainees took hardships and suffered. The reward that Mush gave increased by how much time they stayed.

He had heard about the mountain many times before, but he had never actually been there. He thought there was no reason to. It was hard enough surviving as a mercenary, and living itself was a hardship.

There was a simple reason why he came. There was no reason to go to Behengeru, and there wasn't a place that he could easily train. If he wanted to, he could have stayed in Jack's inn for another 2 years.

But if he did, there wasn't really hope that he would gain something.

It was a gamble. He didn't know what he would get from this mountain. There were no rumors in his past life. He heard of people who went in, but he didn't remember the people who came out.

'It's up to me.'

It was different from the opportunities that he was looking for. The Mountain of Mush, it wasn't something that could be gotten easily. Hardships must be suffered in order for the reward.

He picked up the bread.

It was a feast when compared to death.

He attempted to practiced his spear techniques with his heavy body. He tried to practice the basics ran, na, and zhe, and the steps of the High Heavens. But his body and spear was heavy. He would have to use inner strength to keep up.

So he became tired easily...

I'm tired.

Sungmin breathed hard. Maybe he picked the wrong penalties, he thought, but it was too late.

After a week.

He still wasn't used to the food. He thought that he would get used to it after a week, but he was stupid.

"Stupid Mush."

He didn't know that bad taste would have so many categories. Everytime he ate, he retched. Everytime he drank, he retched.

'I need more nutrients.;

It was obvious as he had lived in this mountain with just bread and water. His food was slowly running out. He needed to hunt. Sungmin attempted to carry his heavy body to hunt.

He failed.

It wasn't because of his heavy body. The monsters here were fast and strong, fitting to the name of hardships. When he failed twice,

Tap.

A rock fell close to Sungmin. Sungmin who was on the ground resting turned to look at where the rock came from.

A white haired woman was looking at Sungmin. She shook his right hand a few times and came close to Sungmin. Sungmin looked at the spear next to him and stood up.

No one in this mountain could hard each other. That was a rule.

The girl attempted to speak. But he couldn't hear anything. Sungmin tilted his head and the girl sighed. She pulled out the branches that was near her waist.

[I came to help you because you looked terrible.]

Girl wrote the letters on the ground. It was language that he had never seen before,

but he realized what they meant. They were the common Eria language. Every otherworlder knew these letters when they were summoned.

“Can you not speak?”

[Speech, that is not penalty.]

She quickly added.

[I saw you for a few days, you’re doing to die like this.]

“...I’m going to die?”

[Food without balance. Your body is heavy. That is your penalty?]

“...Yes.”

[Your body has become weak because of your lack of good balance. Your body is heavy. You’re going to fail at hunting. So you die.]

“So you want to help me?”

[Yes.]

The girl said and let down the branches. She scratched the back of her head and looked around. Then.

Her body disappeared. Surprised, Sungmin tried to find her and turned his head to locate her. Pwk! A sound occurred.

A deer that Sungmin had tried to catch for days was lying on the ground dead. The girl dusted off her hand and lifted the deer.

‘A master...’

Sungmin’s face turned pale. The girl let down the body of the deer next to Sungmin.

“...what do you want?”

Sungmin asked. To that, the girl tilted her head.

“Don’t you want something? That’s why you’re helping me?”

Sungmin said again. To that, the girl blinked and laughed. Well, her face was laughing, but there was no sound. Her voice was blocked.

[There is nothing I want.]

The girl wrote down.

[I just helped you because you were struggling. That is all. It’s not that hard for me anyway.]

“...Just goodwill?”

[Goodwill? It’s not goodwill but the kindness of my heart. I’m kind.]

The girl wrote and smiled.

[It’s nothing to be said. It’s easy to catch a monster to me. I’m fast.]

That wasn’t just it.

Sungmin was close to first rate. That Sungmin wasn’t even able to catch up with her movements. The deer... was far away. She moved there so quickly and killed the deer. It meant that the girl was a great master.

[I live near here. I see you a lot. If my neighbors die, I feel bad. So I’m helping you.]

“...And in the future?”

[If you need me to. This stuff. But you should try to do this yourself.]

The girl advised. Sungmin nodded her head with a surprised face. Not goodwill but out of the kindness of the heart. Helping just because she was a kind person. Something like that was never seen by Sungmin.

“...What’s your name?”

[Baek Sogo]

She wrote down her name. That name. His face paled.

He knew the name.

Silent Flare. Baek Sogo.

It was martial artist that spread her name around during his 13 years.

But when he died, she wasn't even alive.

From now in 8 years, she would die.

Small Pegasus Wijihoyun would kill her.

3 weeks has passed since he met Sogo. it's been a month since he arrived at this mountain.

Sungmin gave attention to the trainee that were also living in this mountain. Like Sogo said, she was a nice person that came out of nowhere to help Sungmin. It was definitely like her nickname, Silent Flare.

[Your penalty isn't good.]

She wrote down on the ground.

[Suffering is hard. To take away the pleasure of eating. That's one of the worst peanties.]

"Yours seems very easy."

[Not true. I'm used to it, but it's still annoying having to write on the ground.]

She made an annoyed face. Even so, it had to better than what Sungmin was suffering now.

[Is hunting still hard?]

"My body is too heavy..."

[Your speed technique's level is too low. You have a good deal of inner strength, but...

how about attempting to improve your speed technique first?]

She advised him. Sungmin was thinking about that as well. He nodded his head.

“Is there no one else other than me and you in this mountain?”

[No way.]

She shook her head.

[The longest one stayed for 1 year. Do you know. Penalties add up as you stay longer. One was added to me when I reached half a year.]

“...Is it your left arm?”

Sungmin looked at her left arm. In the 3 weeks he has known her, she had never used her left arm once.

[Right. I lost any feeling I had in my left arm. There's no strength in it anymore.]

She smiled bitterly.

[It's not a good one thinking about long term. If I continue like this, only my right arm will get stronger so the balance doesn't fit.]

“...The others?”

[They are all taking their own penalties. To be honest, there's no one like you who took 2 penalties when beginning the journey. It's that much harder. But you'll gain more out of it later.]

She wrote and erased repeatedly.

[You're curious about the other trainees?]

“Well... yes.”

[Then I'll introduce you.]

Sogo nodded her head and wrote. She wanted to show everything. She put her branch

on her waist and started to walk. Sungmin dragged his heavy body and followed.

“Can’t you teach me a speed technique?”

To that, Sogo turned her head. She looked dumbfounded and quickly wrote on the ground.

[Even if I am a nice person, I can’t give away my food supply.]

Of course, Sungmin thought.

He only tried. But it was still a shame.

Chapter 29

The Mountain of Mush (4)

There weren't many otherworlders who succeeded in spreading his or her name across the entire continent. It might not be hard for one area, but for Eria, it meant that the person was a huge genius and also did many things to spread their fame.

Baek Sogo fit both of those categories. Like her nickname said, she was a martial artist. He didn't know where she came from, but she suddenly came out of nowhere and spread her name.

When he first heard of her, it was when he started as a mercenary. Therefore, in at least 2 years, she would be leaving the mountain.

'But she dies.'

He knew that. The death was there. That was definite.

In his past life, she died. To none other than the Small Pegasus.

In 8 years.

He looked at the Sogo that was walking in front of him. He had the penalty of heaviness. It wasn't easy to even take a step.

What Sogo had as a speciality was quickness. It was the same as before. Like her nickname said, she was as fast as a flare. He knew in the three weeks just how fast Sogo was. Unlike Sungmin who couldn't hunt because of his heaviness, she swiftly and easily caught them.

Sungmin couldn't even locate her movements.

[You're too slow.]

Sogo stopped. And then she wrote down.

[Should I carry you?]

“...Yes?”

[Don't ask again when you already saw it. You're too slow, so I'll just carry you.]

She wrote down again. He hesitated. Even if it was Sogo, it didn't feel right to be carried by a girl. But this was no time for pride, so he finally nodded his head. She picked Sungmin up and carried her on her back. He held her shoulders tightly.

Kindness.

Nice person.

Those were funny words to say about herself, but to Sungmin, she was definitely a kind person. She did his hunting for him for 3 weeks. She gave him other plants to eat as well and told him where to get water.

And didn't want anything in return. Sogo... was similar to Wijihoyun, but also different. To be honest, Wijihoyun gave Sungmin things because of the relationship that they were in- friends.

Then Sogo?

Were they friends?

‘I don't know.’

He didn't think that friends just happened when one person just proclaimed that the other person was their friend. Honestly, Sungmin didn't know what friends meant. He never had any before, so how would he know.

Friends, or not, he was happy for her kindness.

One month.

It was only a month, but it was the most terrible month of his entire previous 13 years of life. If it wasn't for her, he wouldn't have survived.

‘But she... dies.’

And it wasn't from a random person. Small Pegasus Wijihoyn. The first friend that he had ever had. That Wijihoyn would kill Sogo.

Why?

Just why?

Let's think. Why would Sogo die. The person that killed Sogo was Wijihoyn. That was true.

It was because of her killing Sogo that Wijihoyn started to spread her name around.

'No, it's not just because of Sogo.'

He remembered the incident. It wasn't something that had anything to do with Sungmin, but the incident itself shook the entire Eria with its news.

Dungeon.

Those existed in places in Eria. There was magic inside of it. The monsters respawned after a time even if they were killed, and the monsters couldn't be taken as spoils.

But, there were other prizes other than just monster spoils. Intelligence Potions, magic books, other potions, artifacts, there were many things that could be earned from dungeons.

And at the end, there was a huge prize. If the prize was taken, the dungeon disappeared with the magic lost.

In 8 years, a dungeon in Eria opens. Not just Sogo, but many other people went inside in the dungeon to get prizes.

But the only person who came out was Wijihoyn. He didn't know what she got from the dungeon. She had never said anything about it. But she did open her mouth about something.

She killed everyone who went inside herself.

Sogo stopped. The heaviness that Sungmin felt was only felt by him and didn't apply to Sogo.

Even though, Sogo's steps never slowed down even after a while of running.

She slightly tapped Sungmin's butt. Sungmin stopped thinking and got down on the ground. As he touched the ground, his knees slightly bent because of the pressure.

"What's that?"

A sharp voice came closer.

"Ugh...!"

As the girl came out, a strong smell permeated through the air. Sungmin wrinkled his nose. Sogo also moved back a few steps.

"You rude people!"

The girl spat out. Her face and body was a complete mess. Her long hair was dirty and messy and filled with dirt and dust so the original color couldn't be seen.

It wasn't just the hair. Her face was filled with mud. The clothes she wore seemed like a robe, but it felt like rags.

'Why is she so dirty...?'

"Baek Sogo. You b*tch. What is this kid?"

Every Time the girl said anything, a strong smell came up. It felt like she would be a beautiful woman if she was clean and wore nice clothes, but with odors coming out from her entire body now, there was no beauty to be found.

[That is...]

[Sogo took out a branch.]

[I'll have to introduce you. First, that dirty girl's name is Scarlet. She's a magician. The kid's name is Lee Sungmin.]

"Sungmin? Is he a martial artist?"

[Probably.]

Sogo answered. A magician. He thought the trainees would be martial artists, but to think that there was also a magician.

“...I’m called Lee Sungmin.”

“Scarlet. I’m warning you now, but my penalty is not washing. I can’t bathe or even clean my teeth. So I’m like this.”

Scarlet spit out. She rubbed her eyes.

“I’ve also gotten a ‘Don’t change clothes.’ as well. So, you know? I can’t help that I smell terrible.”

“Ah... OK.”

Sungmin nodded as she shot out. He wanted to say something else, but he was afraid of the stench coming from her.

“So, you mute b*tch. Why are you here?”

[This kid wanted to know the other trainees.]

“Ha! Wondering about strange things. Why? You’re wondering what penalties other people got.?”

Scarlet turned around to look at Sungmin. Everytime she turned her head, the sky snowed. It was the dandruff from her hair.

“No... that’s not it. I just, we’re in the same position, so I wanted to...”

“Same position? Look at this kid say. Hey! I’ve been here for half a year already? What do you mean same position?”

Scarlet made a fist and brought it down on Sungmin’s head. It didn’t hurt, but it felt dirty that such a dirty hand was making contact with his head.

[Don’t say that. It’s only been a month since this kid came, but he’s already had 2 penalties.]

Sogo said. To that, Scarlet made a surprised face.

“...Two? Isn't this a mad b*tch? Why did you do such a crazy thing?”

“Ah... I thought that would helpful to me.”

“Helpful. You crazy b*tch!”

Scarlet screamed with laughter.

“Kid. There are only 4 people including me and her that have been living here for over half a year. And the only one who started off with 2 penalties is that idiot b*tch over there.”

“...Yes?”

Sungmin made a surprised face and looked at Sogo. She made a nonchalant face and wrote down.

[Voice, and telepathy. Those are the two penalties.]

No wonder. It felt weird that she wasn't using telepathy even though she was a master already.

“But there's another crazy b*tch that's here. I don't know how long you're last.”

Scarlet said and turned around. She looked like she had nothing else to say.

“What is Scarlet training for?”

[What did you come here for?]

To Sungmin's question, she answered back.

“...to fulfill my martial arts limit.”

[That's right. The people here are waiting to get something after hardships and suffering. I also want to increase my martial arts and Scarlet wants to increase her magic.]

She carried Sungmin again. While they were moving, Sungmin tried to think of the name Scarlet.

‘Ah.’

He remembered.

Scarlet Resir. She was still living until he died in his previous and she was the great magician that created the Resir School branch.

‘What is this?’

Sogo and Scarlet.

The people who stayed here for over half a year were people who spread their names around in Eria.

“Baek Sogo. it’s you.”

The person after Scarlet was an old man. He was turned around, standing near a huge cliff.

“It seems like there’s another person with you. Who is that kid, is it someone who can’t talk as well?”

The old man turned around. Sungmin’s mouth widened. His face was scratched and bruised. Not just his face. All his skin was filled with injuries.

[His penalty is sight.]

A person that can’t see. He walked carefully towards them. He couldn’t see, but he walked easily towards Sungmin and Sogo.

[So you have to tell him what I’m saying. Ah. That person’s name is Dok Bejun.]

Dok Bejun.

Dok Bejun?

‘Ghost Blade!’

Sungmin swallowed his scream.

It was the entrance of another magnate.

Chapter 30

Genius (1)

Ghost Blade Dok Bejun.

Like Baek Sogo, he was a martial artist who spread his name across Eria. First with the great magician Scarlet and now Dok Bejun?

‘Why are there so many magnates...?’

No, maybe at this point, they weren’t strong enough to be called that. The main point was that they really started to spread their name was after leaving the mountain.

Therefore, Dok Bejun, Baek Sogo, and Scarlet all became huge figures after training in this mountain.

“Who are you?”

Bejun looked at Sungmin and asked. He wasn’t able to see because of his penalty. Sungmin looked at Sogo. She wrote down on the ground with her branch.

[Just introduce yourself. There’s no need to be scared. He looks scary, but he’s not a bad person.]

“...I’m called Lee Sungmin.”

Sungmin bowed down in an awkward position. Bejun looked in the direction of Sungmin and held his hand out.

Surprised, Sungmin couldn’t move before Bejun took hold of Sungmin’s shoulder. He rubbed Sungmin’s shoulder and arms with his hands.

“You don’t seem to use a blade.”

“Yes?”

“Looking at your muscles, a spear. Spear... is a good weapon. How old are you? Your voice and everything, you seem young.”

“...I’m 15.”

Sungmin answered. Bejun nodded and tapped the blade on his waist.

“Would you like to duel?”

“Yes?”

“Ah, don’t worry. We can’t hurt each other. I don’t have any intention of hurting you. Even if I can’t see right now.”

To that, Sungmin hesitated and looked at Sogo. She didn’t really care. She didn’t seem to want to intervene.

“...My skills aren’t good enough yet.”

“Ah? That’s a shame.”

He looked actually pretty sad about that. He was a martial artist called Ghost Blade. No, was he not called that now?

‘Thinking about it...’

He died. Like Sogo. He went into the same dungeon as Wijihoyun and wouldn’t come out. It was strange seeing a person who would die 8 years later.

[Let’s go back.]

Sogo wrote down. To that, Sungmin tilted his head.

“Didn’t you say 4 people?”

There were 4 people that were in the mountain for half a year. Sogo, Scarlet, Bejun. He had only met 3 people.

“Don’t try to meet Plam.”

Bejun who was listening said.

“He isn’t going to meet you, but still don’t go. It’s not good for you.

[Say that you get it.]

“Ah... I get it.”

Sogo lifted Sungmin again. They left the cliff and came back to Sungmin’s resting place. His resting place was basically just a small house.

[Plam doesn’t know how to be social.]

Sogo wrote down.

“What does it mean that it’s not good for me?”

[Plam...]

Sogo smiled bitterly and wrote down.

[He’s amazing. He lived here for a year and he’s strong. I never really fought him, but if I do, I’m going to lose. Easily.]

It was a surprising. Sogo who was already over the apex limit was saying that she would lose easily against Plam.

[Not just me. If that Bejun fought him, he would lose as well.]

“What is that guy?”

He couldn’t help but be horrified. He didn’t know how strong Bejun was, but he felt like a great master from his aura. His Ghost blade nickname was a proof of his strength.

[What should I say. A genius that comes out once every hundred years.]

Sogo laughed. She didn’t laugh loudly, of course.

[Or just a genius out of a million. I’ll tell you something. I showed Plam a speed technique. He followed it immediately.]

It was as if he got hit with a hammer. Sungmin looked at Sogo's techniques once or twice, but it was hard to look with his eyes. But Plam copied it as soon as he saw it once.

[Not just me. He copies Bejun's sword techniques, Scarlet's magic. What is that if he's not a genius.]

Martial arts might be not that bad. It was only just a way to move the body. But to copy magic, that was just impossible.

[I'm telling you. Don't meet him.]

"...Because he might steal something from me?"

[That too. Your spear technique is a great one. It'll be a shame if you got it stolen. But that's not the reason.]

"Then why?"

[You'll fall into despair.]

Sogo wrote down and didn't write anything else. He didn't miss the emotion that briefly showed up in her face.

[If you meet a real genius, most people fall into despair.]

That was true.

Sungmin knew the people that fit into the real genius category. Small Pegasus Wijihoyun. She was a genius that he had ever met before.

[So don't meet him. If you don't want to feel hopeless.]

"...I will."

[I like your style.]

Sogo wrote down.

[I think it's great for a person to try to achieve something. Especially if the journey

involved pain and suffering, other people would want to cheer along. I think so too. I want you to get what you want.]

“Isn’t that the same for you?”

Sungmin asked. Sungmin wasn’t that special. Like him, Sogo also got 2 penalties starting off. And now, she got another one recently.

[I’m trained.]

Sogo answered.

[But you’re not. Still, you’re holding up. There’s only Plam who stayed here for a year. Do you know why?]

“...I don’t.”

[The pain and suffering only get worse as time goes on. More penalties adds on. It’s harder to survive. If you can’t, you die.]

Sogo laughed.

[I don’t know how long you will last, but I hope you last without despair. I cheer you on.]

“...Thank you.”

He had gotten a lot of help from Sogo for a month. He was feeling kindness towards her.

To the point that he hoped that she wouldn’t die



Suffering grows as time goes on. That seemed strange to Sungmin. He wasn’t used to the taste that came into his mouth and the weight on him as well.

But he wasn’t staying in place either.

‘I’m growing quickly.’

It's been 4 months since he arrived. His Amethyst Cloud came up to the 3rd level. Even with his fast growth rates, grace techniques like Amethyst Cloud grew really slowly. But in only 3 months, it grew from level 2 to level 3.

'This mountain... there's something about it. Even if it's hard, there is a reward for it.'

This could be the reward that Mush was giving. It wasn't just the Amethyst Cloud as well.

His spear skills moved very quickly trying to withstand the weight of his body. It was fast even with this weight, how much faster would it be without the? Sungmin felt his heart beat everytime he thought about it.

I'm getting stronger.

I'm getting closer to Wijihoyun.

It could be just a thought. Wijihoyun wasn't probably doing nothing as he was training hard. Wijihoyun could have already gone to a stronger place by now.

But he didn't want to think that.

He made her his goal. It gave him a goal. It made him open his eyes every day. It made him lift his heavy body everyday and swing his spear. Starting from the basics to the High Heavens, then going to his room and using the Amethyst Cloud.

It was repetitive, but it was a good day. He never... practiced this hard in such a harsh environment.

His inner strength was growing as well. The Potion and the strength from Wijihoyun was spreading through his blood, with the nature of this mountain and the Amethyst Cloud, power was flowing towards his energy supply.

The food still tasted terrible. He didn't want to eat. He retched every time he tried to eat. He actually had to swallow the vomit that was coming out.

His body was still heavy. He had to use his inner strength just to move. His muscles were breaking, and bones were shaking every time he swung his spear.

But he had to do it.

He had to.

He wanted to.

To get closer to her. To get closer to his goal.

Maybe---

Even to surpass.

“Hello.”

Sungmin stopped his spear moves.

When he looked, a boy was looking at him that looked the same age as Sungmin. When he saw the boy's eyes.

He felt pressured. There were stars in his eyes. The stars exploded as he looked. It was the first time he had met such strange eyes.

“I'm Plam. Who are you?”

Plam.

Truthfully, Sungmin never met a person called Plam in his past life.

Ghost Blade Bejun.

Baek Sogo.

Scarlet.

He had heard of those names before. But he had never heard of a name called Plam before.

He heard that Plam could easily win against Bejun and Sogo.

He could copy magic and techniques in just the first time seeing them.

A genius that brought despair just by meeting him. Sogo said that, but Sungmin never

heard of such a genius like him. So he didn't really care.

"...Sungmin."

Sungmin put down his spear and answered.

He didn't think that Plam would come and meet him first.

Chapter 31

Genius (2)

Plam came closer. He looked to be of the same age as Sungmin and looked similar to Sungmin in stature. His eyes looked just like the stars on the sky.

“Lee Sungmin.”

Plam muttered. He was bare handed. He didn’t have any smell like Scarlet, or wasn’t blind like Bejun. He could use his left hand and talk unlike Sogo.

“How long has it been?”

Plam asked. Sungmin was curious what penalties Plam got, but he didn’t ask that right away. Sungmin answered as he looked at Plam’s face.

“About... 3 months?”

He wrote down how long it was since he came here every night. It was perfectly 90 days since he had arrived.

“3 months!”

Plam acted frivolously.

“You stayed here for 3 months. You’re amazing”

“...You stayed for a year?”

Sungmin asked dumbfoundedly. Plam widened his eyes.

“You know me?”

Plam asked.

“I heard it from Sogo.”

‘Ahah, that mute girl. Then you must know my name?’

There was no reason to introduce myself. Plam laughed. He came closer to Sungmin.

“You should have come and talked to me. There’s only people older than me here. I needed a friend.”

Friend. He thought of Wijihoyun and erased the image that came up.

“But you use martial arts?”

Plam asked. Sungmin nodded with a surprised face. To be honest, he didn’t really like the meeting with Plam. Plam... could copy techniques or magic just by looking at them.

Everyone would feel the same way. Techniques were martial artists fortune, and it was same for magicians. But Plam took all of that away just by looking once.

“...Yes.”

“I can tell.”

Plam laughed. He twirled his hair with his fingers.

“Sogo must have told you. That I can copy a technique just by looking.”

Sungmin didn’t answer. But his face was filled with caution. He had met Wijihoyun, and he knew very well by living with her for a while. What kind of people geniuses were.

They were different. Their thoughts exceeded their age. They were proud and self righteous.

“Let’s see... hmm...”

Plam lifted his hands. He didn’t have a spear, but his figure looked like he was holding a spear. Plam looked at Sungmin’s face and laughed.

He moved. He performed the ran, na, zhe, and then performed the High Heavens. Not the whole thing, of course. Sungmin could only do up to the 3rd step.

Still, Sungmin was horrified at Plam. He could do anything that he saw. It was like Sogo said.

“It’s a good technique.”

Plam put his hands down and muttered. Like he was rating the technique.

“How is it?”

Plam turned towards Sungmin. His eyes were shining. What was he asking for. Sungmin knew what Plam wanted.

Plam wanted Sungmin to be horrified and surprised.

“...It’s great.”

Sungmin hesitate and muttered. Plam smiled widely at that.

“I do it better than you, right?”

To that, Sungmin’s chest turned cold. Evil intentions... he didn’t know. It could be his personality. But it was always like that. A frog would die because of a kid’s innocent rock throwing. Sungmin was the frog...

“Everyone is like that. It’s strange. Sogo and Bejun, they probably practiced it more than me, but if I do it, I do it better.”

Plam laughed and said. He knew now. Why Sogo didn’t want Sungmin to meet Plam. Why Bejun said it wasn’t good for him.

To a normal person, Sogo and Bejun would be considered geniuses. Sungmin thought they were geniuses as well.

But how would a true genius see them.

And what about a normal person seeing a true genius.

‘It’s this feeling.’

It was a different feeling than with Wijihoyun. She said that she was a genius, but she

never tired to brag about her geniusness. Sungmin never tried to compare him to Wijihoyun. The High Heavens that he was using was made by Wijihoyun, and the basics that he had learned was all from her.

Instead of being a comparison, Wijihoyun was more of a teacher to him and a goal.

But not Plam. This cruel young kid knew of his talent. He knew how other people felt about his talents.

Sungmin understood very well. Why Sogo said not to fall into despair.

A true genius makes people fall into despair just by meeting them.

“What penalties did you get?”

Plam asked. He probably felt that Sungmin’s silence wasn’t very fun.

“I have 4 penalties. You're curious, right?”

“No, I’m not.”

Sungmin said coldly. He was curious to be truthful. What did Plam have to suffer. Sogo had 3 penalties, while Scarlet had 2. Bejun probably had 2 as well.

Sogo started off with 2. Was it the same with Plam. a new penalty came every half a year, then it makes sense that Plam would have 4 penalties.

“Lies. You’re curious.”

Plam laughed.

“I’ll tell you. This mountain. A stronger penalty makes Mush more happy. Therefore, suffering makes your reward better.”

I don’t need it. Plam muttered and added.

“Your spear technique is a great one. But the one who has to wield it, you, isn’t very great.

He knew. He had heard it before. You don’t have any talent. To a real genius.....

Sungmin was probably nothing.

“So. how’s this. You should just give up and leave the mountain. Well, with your talent, you could go to a city and live easily. Don’t try to use something that doesn’t even fit you...”

“Leave.”

Sungmin’s hands that was holding the spear tightened. Plam widened his eyes.

“I’m not done yet.”

“Leave.”

“Why are you saying that? It’s for your own good. Why. I’m trying to help you. Your wasting time.”

“It’s my time.”

Sungmin spit out.

I wanted to kill him. It was a long time since he had felt this violent. But he couldn’t actually kill him. Mush would block him, and even without Mush, there was no way that he would win against Plam.

He was a genius.

“Come on.”

Plam muttered. In his face, there was no smile anymore. Plam stepped back a few times and looked at Sungmin’s face.

“It’s for you. Why do you hate me?”

“I never said I wanted you to say stuff like that to me.”

“So I can’t say something without your permissions?”

“Like you said to me, I have permission to say stuff to you”

Plam couldn't say anything to that. Plam's shoulder shook. As he was about to say something.

Phee.

It was as if there was a wind. Sogo arrived in between Plam and Sungmin. Her cold face was looking at Plam. Sungmin was surprised at her arrival, but Plam didn't seem like it. Plam felt her coming unlike Sungmin.

"I thought you would have kept listening while hiding."

Plam mocked. Sogo shook her head. To that, Plam opened his mouth. But he didn't say anything. Sogo put her hand and blocked his face.

"You take care of him too well. I'm jealous."

Plam muttered and turned around. In a few steps, he turned back around towards Sungmin.

"I'll see you later."

Sungmin didn't say anything. Plam walked away quickly. Seeing that Plam left, Sogo turned around. She pulled out her branch and wrote down.

[You held it in.]

"I had to. I'm not leaving this mountain just yet."

Sungmin turned around. His steps felt a bit heavier than usual. It wasn't just the weight, but Sungmin's mind felt heavy.

"...Thank you for coming."

He didn't hear a reply. She couldn't say anything. Sungmin lifted his spear. He swung with just his outside strength.

His chest was stuffy. There was something stuck in his mind. Don't despair. That's what she said. 10 years later. He thought of the promise. The 13 years he lived and died in his previous life. The shameful death. And now.

When he looked up, the sun was already going down. Sogo wasn't there, but there was a deer that was in her place. His energy supply was depleted. His body was filled with sweat and his muscles were dying.

'It's not enough.'

Talent.

How much work would a regular person have to put in to follow a genius. 10 times, 100 times to follow that. That much might not even be enough.

Talent. Talent.

He didn't have talent. Wijihoyun said that, and Plam confirmed it. He didn't need anything. Sungmin knew that. He was going to rely on something else because he didn't have talent. He got the martial skeleton and the Genuine Heavens and the potion and everything other to make up for his lack of talent.

Talent.

That was heavy. That made him despair. No, the real horror was this. When he would meet Wijihoyun in 10 years.

That I wouldn't be strong enough.

That she would be disappointed.

He was afraid of that.

"Mush."

Sungmin opened his mouth. He held his shivering hands. His despair turned into fear. This life that he had gotten again... would end uselessly.

"Mush...!"

The call turned into a cry. He was crying. After he came back, it was the first time that he was crying.

[Human.]

A voice came.

[Why have you called a God.]

A haze appeared in front of him.

Chapter 32

Genius (3)

Mush.

The god of suffering and penance.

He had never actually met Mush before. But he had felt his existence. When he first came into the mountain and cursed Mush, Mush muttered in his mind a few times.

Eria. There are Gods in this area. There are places where the Gods are honored. A place exists for every god. A priest uses the power of the God. The penalties that he had right now were from Mush's power.

A haze that appeared in front of him was combining. It turned into a small girl's figure. A girl. Yes, Mush turned into a small girl. Her black hair was long enough that it could touch the floor. Rags were worn as a robe, and there were bandages all over her body. Her two eyes were silver.

"Human.

Mush called. Her face was calm for a god of suffering. She came towards Sungmin and asked.

"Why are you crying. Do you want to give up this suffering from this mountain."

That wasn't it. Sungmin chewed on his lower lip. Blood flowed from it. He didn't want to give up.

Just that his end would be useless. That made him fearful. Plam made Sungmin fall in despair. He felt inferior.

Why couldn't I be a genius.

"Human."

Mush called Sungmin. Sungmin lifted his hand and rubbed his eyes. He couldn't cry forever. Crying... didn't change anything.

Inferiority. He ignored it. He lived and went like that in his past life. Even if he was reborn again, his 13 years of experience was actually a bad thing for him. If he did not meet WIjihoyun, Sungmin

Wouldn't have changed at all.

"...I want to add a penalty."

Sungmin lifted himself up.

His body was heavy.

"Ohhh."

Mush's eyes brightened. Her face had emotion in it. Mush was looking at Sungmin with curious eyes.

"You want to add a penalty?"

"Yes."

He thought that maybe it was impolite to be like this to a God, but Mush didn't seem to care. Instead, Mush seemed to like Sungmin's attitude and answer. She laughed.

"You want to add the suffering. There is no way that I wouldn't let you do that."

Mush added, however. Her eyes narrowed.

"But could you withstand it?"

Mush asked. She came closer. His body was a 15 year old, and was just over 160 cm. Mush was a head shorter than that Sungmin.

"You can't even hold the 2 penalties that you have right now. But, you want to do more. You are very foolish."

Mush laughed. Sungmin made a fist. She was right. Taste and Weight. Sungmin wasn't

even used to those two yet. The weight felt worse every time he thought about it, and it was the same for the water and food as well.

“...I can do it.”

No, I had to. Sungmin looked Mush and answered. Mush laughed.

“Is it because you came back from the dead?”

Sungmin’s face froze.

“...How...?”

“I can see it.”

Mush answered.

“Everything lives and dies. That is the law. Yes, Existence has living and dying. That is the principle of cause and effect.

Mush pointed at Sungmin.

“But not all existence follows the law. Overloading the law exists. If you overload the law of existence, you become immortal. But you’re different.”

Sungmin couldn’t understand. Laws and overloading and immortality was all strange things to Sungmin.

“You aren’t an immortal or an overloader, but the principle has been broken. Not everyone can see that, but as a God, I can see it.”

“...The principle was broken... so is that a bad thing for me?”

“All existence has stacks.”

Mush answered.

“But you died and somehow defied death. That’s very strange. Your soul stacked hugely while defying the principle. It wouldn’t do anything to you when you’re living, but when you die... Haha! You’re going to suffer for ages.”

Even if he lived 13 years of life, it didn't mean that he had 13 years of stacks. Because he had defied death, Sungmin's stacks were incomparable to a regular humans. It didn't mean that he had surpassed the principle, but only went against. That was a crime to existence.

"...If it's after my death, it doesn't matter."

He answered. His mind wasn't fine. After death... he would suffer for ages.

It was after death.

"My death doesn't matter... I want another penalty."

"I said that you can't do it, you arrogant human."

Mush shook her head.

"You overrate yourself. No, you're limit isn't that big."

"Aren't you the god of suffering?"

Sungmin spit out. He put his hands and tapped his chest.

"I want suffering. Why are you trying to stop me."

"You aren't listening."

Mush shook her head again.

"What do you want?"

"...I want to ask you first."

"You want to question a god without any compensation."

"...There's nothing I can give you..."

"You're lying."

Mush laughed.

“How about your soul.”

“...What?”

“Your soul. The soul that defied the principle... it seems useful.”

“You want me to die?”

Sungmin dumbfoundedly asked. Mush laughed at that.

“No, that’s not it. Your soul isn’t mature yet. Yes... if you die. Then you can give up your soul to me.”

“...I’ll reject that.”

Sungmin swallowed and answered. To give away the soul. Mush seemed like the devil instead of a god.

“Well, you don’t have to say it now. Just think about it. I’ll answer you. What do you want to know?”

“...The reward grows every time a penalty is added. I want to know about the reward.”

“The suffering in this mountain is a reward.”

Mush answered.

“You should have felt it. Or did you not?”

He knew. From the 3 months here, Sungmin’s technique grew quickly. His ‘skill’ went up. Like Mush said, the mountain was a reward.

“Penalties increase the reward. Your growth had gone up a lot because of your penalties. If you get more, you will grow quicker. A more painful penalty has more rewards than a smaller one.”

“...I see.”

Sungmin nodded his head. Mush knew what he was thinking. She added.

“Yu want to cover your lack of talent with penalties. Why do you want to do such a thing? What do you want.”

“...I made a promise.”

With Wljihoyn. 10 years, no 9 now. 9 years later.

“Voice.”

Sungmin pointed to his neck.

“Dreams.”

He wanted to get the penalty that Scarlet had. But listening to Mush, it didn't feel like there would be much a difference if he added those skills. And Scarlet and Sungmin were in different situations. If Sungmin who had to move around a lot couldn't wash or change clothes, there would be solution if he got a disease or something.

“4.”

Mush smiled.

“I'll say this first. Penalties get harsher as they are added. You're the first human that said they would get 4 penalties... how long will you survive?”

Mush muttered and pointed to Sungmin.

His voice disappeared first. Sungmin tried to say something. But his voice didn't come out. The other one was a dream. It was an awkward penalty, but Sungmin knew how awkward penalties worked very harshly.

“You will fear falling asleep every day.”

Mush whispered

Sungmin thought that too.

Mush disappeared after saying that. It felt very awkward that his voice didn't come out. He tried to say something, but nothing came out. He sighed and then took a branch near him.

He was going to have to write like Sogo tomorrow. Sungmin went towards the corpse of the deer that Sogo gave him. Eating was terrifying, but he couldn't not eat.

He had to eat to live.

Sungmin silently tried to knife the corpse. Dismantling the deer wasn't hard. The hard part was the eating. But he knew how hard the eating would be, so Sungmin's hands couldn't help but shiver.

The blood smelled terrible.

But he didn't stop. Sungmin dismantled the corpse and put up a fire. It was almost night. He would have to eat... and then when the night came, he would have to sleep.

'What would I dream about.'

Sungmin held in his fear.

Chapter 33

Genius (4)

You will fear falling asleep everyday.

It was as Mush said. Sungmin screamed and lifted his body. How long did he sleep? His time senses were all wrong. His memories were tangled up. He felt like he slept... very little. It was still night, and the moon was still up. He didn't remember the position of the moon when he slept, but it didn't seem that it moved much.

No.

Was it?

Sungmin lifted his shoulders. His shoulders were shivering like crazy. It was the first time he had had such fear. The fear of something unknown that he would never know. Sungmin pulled his cape towards him and wrapped it tightly around him. The fear slowly disappeared and Sungmin tried to calm down.

Just for a bit.

The dream... he didn't want to think about it. Sungmin dreamt about his younger self. To think of that, he had to go back 1 year of this life, then 13 years of his past life to the point of his regular self before Eria.

He had parents.

There was no one without parents. Sungmin had one as well. He had parents. They... he didn't remember much. He didn't want to have any memories of 'parents.' He wanted to forget.

He didn't want to be sad over them

Anyway, like every young kid, Sungmin was afraid of ghosts. He was afraid of the darkness that came when he needed to fall asleep, and he used to fear the little sounds in the dark.

He didn't want to feel it though. Ghosts. If he thought about them, he felt that he would have nightmares about ghosts.

It was the same now. He didn't want to feel the nightmares that he had.

It didn't mean that he wasn't going to have nightmares. Mush told the truth. Sleep wasn't a time of peace anymore. Dreams were harsher than his penalty of taste.

But humans had to sleep. They had to.

He didn't know how many times he woke up. Everytime he woke up screaming, his body was filled with sweat and mind tangled. The freezing cold of the mountain shivered Sungmin's body. Sungmin put up a fire. He pulled the cape close and sat down.

And slept

And woke up.

And slept.

And woke up.

The sun came up.

The nightmares were terrible. There weren't any rest from the constant nightmares. They changed every time. It was barely a day, no, half a day. A bit less? Sungmin looked up at the sky.

It was still night. He needed more sleep. But he couldn't. He didn't want to. Sungmin lifted himself up.

Sungmin took his spear.

[Crazy.]

Sogo came up to him after the sun came up. Seeing Sungmin's pale face and his closed mouth, she guessed what crazy thing Sungmin did.

[How many more penalties did you get?]

Sogo wrote down. Sungmin put down his spear. He looked at Sogo's face. She sighed and gave the branch to Sungmin.

[Two.]

[Crazy kid.]

Sogo pointed at the first thing that she wrote.

[What penalty. One must be voice.]

[Dreams.]

Sungmin answered. It was uncomfortable trying to talk using the branch. Therefore, his words were short.

Dreams... Dreams... Sogo whispered the word to herself.

Sogo had 3 penalties. Her left arm. Voice. Telepathy. Those were very specific. She couldn't use her left arm. She couldn't use her voice. She couldn't use telepathy.

Those were the same for the other trainees in the mountain. Same for Scarlet and same for Bejun. But Sungmin. Weight, Dreams, taste... they were subjective.

Those were incredibly harsh.

[Was it on purpose?]

Sogo asked.

[The rewards are better as the penalties are harsher... why are you so rushed?]

[Because I don't have talent.]

Sungmin answered.

No talent.

Sogo looked down at the words and closed her mouth. She couldn't say anything, but it seemed as if she was oppressed by Sungmin's answer.

No talent. It was nothing that Sogo could relate to. This world. Sogo knew that she had talent. It was only after she came into this mountain and met Plam that she felt despair about herself. It was only because of the presence of a true genius Plam that her talent was overshadowed.

[Talent.]

Sogo wrote down. The lack of talent... did she feel it. When she met Plam, Sogo felt despair about herself. That wasn't just Sogo. Everyone, Scarlet, Bejun, everyone felt that way.

Those were people with talent, however. Even those people were overwhelmed by Plam. How would Sungmin who was nothing compared to those magnates feel. Sogo couldn't imagine easily.

Sogo looked at Sungmin. It started from just observation. Since he was the same age as Plam, she thought Sungmin was a genius like Plam.

However, Sungmin was better than his age, but he was not a genius. It was obvious that he was better, but he increases his skill so slowly.

Sogo felt the lack of talent and skill from Sungmin. But she knew now. The lack of talent that Sungmin said was true, and his face was filled with despair.

But his eyes weren't dead yet.

[Your goal is very high up.]

Sogo wrote down. Sungmin looked surprised at that. He had never said anything about Wijihoyun to Sogo.

[Don't be surprised. I can see it in your eyes. Everyone has a goal in their mind. But there aren't that many people who would work that hard to reach it.]

Sogo muttered and stopped writing. She looked like she was thinking and kept writing.

[My goal was to become the best of the martial artists. It changed when I was summoned here. To become the best of the entire world.]

Sogo wrote down and gave the branch to Sungmin. Sungmin tilted his head. He didn't

know what answer Sogo wanted him to give.

Sogo's face kept changing as Sungmin hesitated. Then finally, Sogo nodded her head. Her hand went inside her pocket.

She pulled out an old book and held it out to Sungmin.

Shadowless.

Sungmin looked surprised as he looked at Sogo. Sogo looked nonchalant. Sungmin wanted to write something, but Sogo didn't let him. The book that she gave touched Sungmin's chest.

[You told me before. To tell me a speed technique.]

Sogo took the branch from him and wrote down.

[Shadowless. That is all my technically. My footwork, everything. It's Shadowless. Now you learn it.]

[Why me?]

Sungmin wrote down. He did ask her once to teach him a speed technique, but that was just a suggestion. He didn't really think she would give him one.

[Pity.]

Sogo wrote down. Sungmin's face hardened.

[I have talent unlike you. So I don't know how hard your despair is and how harsh your goal might be. I want to give you this, but I want to help you even if I don't understand you.]

Sogo was honest. Pity. Pity... Sungmin laughed.

[And I'm a nice person.]

Pity. Maybe she thought it was embarrassing that she said that because she added that.

But Sungmin didn't feel bad about Sogo's pity. If it was like this, he was happy about it.

[Do I have to call you Master?]

Sogo shook her head.

[I'm not the one who created Shadowless. There's no reason to call me that. Just call me Teacher.]

To think that he would be Sogo's pupil.

His life was definitely going a different way than before.

Sungmin read the book that she gave him right away. He wasn't skilled enough to understand just how great the skill was, but he still knew that it was a great technique

'It's good enough to be compared to the High Heavens and Amethyst Cloud.'

Sungmin swallowed. There was no opportunity like this before in his life. The only thing like that was that he was reborn.

But how was this life. He had gotten so many things from Wijihoyun and gotten Shadowless from Sogo.

'The problem is me.'

Would you like to learn Shadowless.

Yes.

Sungmin closed the book.

'9 years... no...'

8 years

Chapter 34

Genius (5)

To get used to it.

It was hard to do. The first one that he got used to was his voice. He couldn't say anything. No screams, shouts, anything. Anything that he could make with his mouth was gone.

That wasn't really a big penalty however. There was only Sogo that Sungmin met frequently, and Sogo also had the same penalty. Therefore, Sogo helped Sungmin get used to the penalty faster.

The silent conversations. It wasn't great, but it wasn't hard to get used to.

But the other ones were different.

The weight that Sungmin was feeling was getting heavier. Especially after learning Shadowless, the weight carried his body down.

Shadowless was a speed technique.

Therefore, the weight that Sungmin had as a penalty became a huge problem for him. The technique in specific required a lot of skill, so it was harder for Sungmin.

'If you want to move faster, the weight keeps you down.'

That's where he was stuck. He couldn't get fast enough even if he followed the cultivation manual. He needed the strength and speed to overcome that.

'Thinking is easy.'

Thinking was always easy. Reality was not.

If the weight was holding Sungmin back, the taste and dream penalty was completely breaking Sungmin. Food wasn't good at all, and sleep wasn't a time of rest anymore.

No, the taste penalty was probably better than his dream penalty.

He was afraid of sleeping. Sungmin begged everyday, to not let it be night, to not get tired.

But he always slept. His body tired out after swinging his spear so many times. And then... he slept like death.

And then he would wake up from his nightmare. Screaming a silent scream, he would sit up near the fire. He would sleep then wake up again.

“Crazy kid.”

That was a thing that he heard a lot since he came to the mountain. He stopped and looked at Scarlet.

He was wondering why she was here, but it seemed as if Sogo brought her here. He glanced at Sogo beside Scarlet, but Sogo didn't give an explanation.

“Why are you mute people looking at each other. You date?”

Scarlet grumbled as she came over. Sungmin put down the spear and picked up his branch. Scarlet's face wrinkled at that.

“Don't ask. I'll tell you everything. Ah, Really! Why did you become mute? It's hard to speak.”

Scarlet grumbled as she scratched her head.

“Sogo. This mute girl. She came a few days before and begged for a while. To help you.”

Scarlet spit out towards Sogo. Sungmin, surprised, looked at Sogo.

“I'll teach you some magic.”

Scarlet went closer to Sungmin. The stench grew as she came closer.

“You should be happy. Magic isn't the easiest thing to use... but this world makes it easier.”

Sungmin tried not to be bothered by the stench. She was grumbling, but Sungmin understood.

He was going to learn magic.

Sungmin never had any relationship with magic. If he wanted to, he might have learned few of the weakest spells, but to a mercenary like him, martial arts was always better.

Scarlet Resir. She wasn't the great now, but in 10 years, she would be a master magician who would create the Resir branch of magic. This was a great opportunity for him.

"Look at this kid."

Scarlet pouted her lips.

"Hey! I said. It's only a few types of magic. I'm not telling you everything. I live off of this. I can't tell you this for free. This isn't free. Sogo, that mute girl is going to pay for it."

[Payment?]

Sungmin put down letters on the ground.

"It's nothing. Sogo is going to help me if I need help without any questions."

It was nothing. That was like a one time slave contract. Sungmin looked at Sogo. She didn't have any emotions.

"I heard about you. You crazy kid. Getting two more penalties. Really... crazy. You're foolish when you're stupid. That's you, kid."

Scarlet laughed.

"I'll teach you 4 types of magic. Mental cleaning. You... have nightmares? Don't think that they're just that. They might harm your mental state. Mental cleaning helps for that... It'll only be like an emergency aid for you though."

She pulled out a magic scroll from her pocket.

“Strength and Haste. Generic buff magic. Give strength and make your body faster. The last one is Fatigue Recovery. It helps recovery stress.”

Sungmin got 4 scrolls of magic. Sungmin blinked a few times and looked down.

Those scrolls were very important to Sungmin right now. Mental cleaning. It would help Sungmin’s mind from nightmares.

Strength and Haste. These would relieve the stress given by his weight penalty. It wouldn’t be a perfect solution, however. The weight penalty was getting harsher everyday.

“Remember this. Magic isn’t a panacea.”

Scarlet warned.

“It’s comfortable, but it’s not a panacea. Strength and Haste may help the body, but your body will have to take the burden of it. Same for the other spells. If you use it too much, your body suffers.”

Scarlet shut her mouth. After a brief silence, Scarlet let out a small sigh.

“...Well. If you were intelligent enough to keep your body healthy, you wouldn’t have taken those penalties. Anyway, it will help. In holding out at least.”

Scarlet said that and went back to her resting place. Sungmin read the scrolls and added them to his skill list.

Then Sogo appeared. Sungmin put away the scrolls and looked up at her.

[Teacher. Because you’re a nice person, you did this all for me?]

[Yes.]

Sogo said confidently. It was the expected answer, but it felt bad to hear it. Sungmin looked at her.

[It’s my problem. Why?]

[You’re not friendly with Scarlet. But I am. So I can ask.]

It was a simple answer. And it was the truth. If Sungmin tried to ask Scarlet, she wouldn't have responded to it. The reason why he was able to learn magic was because Sogo knew Scarlet and Sogo had the ability to help out Scarlet.

[Relationship are important. If I see... you seem to be afraid of relationships. Or no. You don't seem like you trust people.]

It was direct. Sungmin made a surprised face and looked at Sogo. Sogo laughed as if she knew it all along.

[It's not bad to be careful. But if you're too careful... you can't have relationships. You can't live alone.]

That made Sungmin feel many things. The past Sungmin...

Had no companions. Had no friend. He didn't trust. No Classes. He was a cynical guy who wanted to survive. He lived like that for 13 years. He died alone.

But this life.

He had relationships with Hans and Jack. It could have just been because of his talent, but they cared for Sungmin. Lula helped him as well. Wijihoyun was always there for him.

And from Sogo as well.

People couldn't live alone. Relationship were important. That was true. But was being careful bad? What was bad about not wanting to be betrayed. Sungmin's mind swirled in confusion. His experiences were colliding together.

[That must have been a hard word for you.]

Sogo wrote down on the ground.

[Don't think about it too much. You and I are two different people. My words can't always be right. We're different.]

Sogo erased the words she wrote before.

[It must be the first time using magic? Try it.]

Sungmin nodded and thought about magic in his head.

In this world, like martial arts, magic was easy to perform.

However, it depended on the person as well to increase the magic levels.

‘You use your inner strength.’

His inner strength rumbled. Sungmin tried to use mental cleaning first. He could feel his head becoming clear and lighter.

And then the fatigue recovery. The fatigue made his heavy body lighter. His stress from lack of sleep all disappeared.

‘If you use it too much, it hurts the body...’

But this was the best way for now. Sungmin made a refreshed expression as he stared at Sogo. He wanted to try the other ones, but first he wanted to thank Sogo.

[Thank you. Teacher.]

Sungmin wrote it down and bowed his head. Sogo scratched her cheek at that.

[Just remember this. I just think it’s moral to help people. Don’t forget it.]

Sogo wrote.

[So it’s like this. When you receive help from someone, even if you can’t do anything for them now, just keep it in your mind. Grudges... I won’t say to throw them away. If that was true, why would people learn martial arts. I’m a nice person, but I don’t forget grudges easily. I don’t forget kindness definitely.]

Sungmin nodded. He could understand Sogo’s logic.

Sungmin would not forget the kindness that Sogo showed him.

‘Even after 8 years.’

In 8 years, Sogo would die to Wijihoyun.

Sungmin wanted to stop that.

Chapter 35

Training (1)

Because of magic, the penalty of weight became a lot easier to cope with. But that was only for a few days. The moment that he felt used to it,

‘It became heavier.’

Sungmin bit his lips. Mush’s penalties were harsh and cruel. As he got used to it, it became worse and worse.

Sungmin walked. He used the strength magic. He added inner strength just to be able to move.

[It’s gotten worse.]

Sogo came up as Sungmin was struggling to lift his spear. She put out her hand towards Sungmin. Sungmin’s spear came to her.

Sungmin’s weight didn’t count towards her. Sogo swung her spear a few times and shook her shoulders.

[You don’t have to swing your spear all day to practice spear techniques, can’t you use your bare hands?]

[But it’s better with the spear.]

[You’re so stubborn on strange things.]

Sogo laughed

[It’ll be harder to practice Shadowless. If I told you, I shouldn’t have taught you it.]

[Wow.]

[I’m kidding. Since it’s like this, I’ll give you some advice.]

Sogo gave back the spear. When he got it, he almost dropped it because of the weight.

[The suffering of this mountain, if you think about it, helps you move towards your goal]

Sogo started to write.

[It's the hardships to reach your goal that you keep in your mind. Do you understand?]

[...I don't understand.]

[It's simple. As you keep achieving your goal, you get more rewards.]

[Rewards. That's strange.]

[It's not like that all the time. That is... Mush is pretty fair. Suffering always gives rewards. For me, it's the level of martial arts.]

Sungmin tilted his head. Sogo kept writing.

[It's like this. Let's say you made your goal to reach the 2nd level of Shadowless. If you succeed that, you might get up to the 3rd level, not just the 2nd.]

It was direct and easy to understand. Sungmin barely understood the mechanisms of the mountain.

Mush said that the mountain was a reward. That wasn't wrong. The goal that he made for this mountain was to get stronger. As he achieved that, he achieved fast rates of growth.

Therefore, rewards were coming to him.

[I don't know what you're goal is. You didn't say. I don't want to criticize you for making such a high goal. But there is this saying. A thousand miles starts with a step.]

Sogo smiled.

[How about keeping your goal smaller?]

At that, Sungmin figured out something. He had Wijihoyun as a goal, and he was

reckless to that goal.

‘A sparrow gets hurt trying to walk like a stork’

Sungmin smiled bitterly. It wasn’t a good feeling thinking that he was a sparrow. No, maybe he wasn’t.

He might be.

Name: Lee Sungmin

Job: No Class

Skill:

Bright ear.

[Sense brightens in the forest. Can hear small sounds.]

Slaughterer

[Can easily dismantle corpses.]

Murderer

[Experience with murder.]

Quiet steps.

[Can quiet the footsteps.]

Below the useless passive skills.

Amethyst Cloud(4)

High Heavens Sungmin(3)

Iron Skin(8)

Stone Body(8)

One Thunder(6)

Shadowless(1)

Haste

Strength

Fatigue recovery.

Mental cleansing.

His skills and magic showed up. The Iron Skin and Stone Body increased in power natural as inner strength grew. The Amethyst Cloud improved a bit, and so did the High Heavens.

But Shadowless was slow. It might be because of the penalty of weight.

‘The goal is Shadowless to the 2nd level.’

Sungmin made a goal.

“I don’t understand.”

Sogo stopped her steps. She sighed and looked towards the direction of the sound. Plam was sitting on top of a tree. Plam smiled brightly as he jumped off.

“Why do you care about that kid?”

Plam asked.

“He doesn’t have talent. He’s just a normal kid. Why do you care. You made him your pupil.”

Instead of writing. Sogo mouthed something. Plam understood what she was trying to say.

“Don’t worry about it? Why? I can’t stand curiosity. You know me.”

Sogo wrinkled her face. She moved her mouth and Plam shook his head.

“Oh is it that? The normal people are just trying to help each other?”

Sogo turned cold at that. Murderous intent covered Plam. He was shaken slightly at that but wasn't afraid. Plam smiled and waved his hand.

“You're mad because it's true?”

Sogo didn't say anything. She closed her mouth. Plam laughed at seeing the expression on Sogo's face.

“It's funny. A genius like me doesn't understand that feeling.”

Plam turned around and left. The skill that he showed on purpose while leaving was Shadowless, Sogo's best skill. Sogo bit her lower lip. What that kid showed was nothing different from what Sogo could do.

She didn't move from that spot for a while even after he left. She regretted showing off her malice and rubbed her neck. Normal people helping each other. That wasn't false. Sogo wasn't a genius to Plam.

‘You don't know.’

Effort. Plam didn't know. He didn't have to stay in this mountain. But he was, only to have fun with the mountain's penalties.

Therefore, Plam wasn't suffering anything. He was enjoying them and was using his genius talent to make fun of the other trainees.

Sogo wasn't a genius.

She fell into despair when she first met Plam. There's a person like that in the world. Compared to him, Sogo was nothing.

But now, she didn't care. There was nothing that she could get out of being in despair. That's why she stayed here. Scarlet, Bejun, all of them faced that.

And Sungmin.

That's why Sogo taught Shadowless to Sungmin. To make him not fall into despair. To not be discouraged. To stand up and take up the penalties.

She wanted to help.

That was all.

She was that sort of person.

After a month, Sungmin reached the 2nd level of Shadowless.

'No, the third level...'

Sungmin was surprised as he checked the status screen. His goal was to reach the 2nd level of Shadowless.

But what showed up was the 3rd level. Naturally, the 3rd level of Shadowless came up in his head. Like Sogo said, there was a reward.

"It's suffering and hardships."

A voice came to him. Sungmin felt surprised as he turned around. Mush. Mush was shaking and laughing.

"But human. Don't be too happy. If you can reach something easily, how is that hardship. Like the penalties, when you get used to it, the rewards get harder to reach."

Mush smiled and laughed. It was a small goal. He had gotten the reward. He was going to do this a lot, but Mush was saying that it wouldn't work anymore.

[Why are you here?]

Sungmin wrote down. Mush was a God and could appear anytime. When he wanted Mush, she was there. She was a pretty sweet god.

"It's time."

Mush smiled and said. He felt it then.

Half a year.

After half a year, a penalty is added. It was for everyone, Sogo, Scarlet, Bejun. Plam as well.

[I didn't get used to my penalties yet.]

"You wanted those. That's not my concern."

Mush answered.

"If you want to stay longer, you need to get a penalty. That's the rule."

Sungmin had 4. Weight. Taste. Voice. Dreams. The ones other than voice were incredibly annoying.

'The rewards get better as more penalties occur.'

He understood that. With his lack of talent, he had already gotten up to a nice level of martial arts. He was probably at the first rate now. His body wasn't strengthened yet, and it's only been 2 years since he came here, but he had already surpassed his previous self.

Of course, it wasn't all because of Sungmin's efforts. Wijihoyun was there. Potions were there. Sogo was there. Also, without the mountain, Sungmin wouldn't have learned this fast.

[Telepathy.]

"You're avoiding it."

Mush laughed at Sungmin's answer. There was no choice. He had a few that he was thinking of but not yet. He couldn't get another annoying one without getting used to his current penalties.

So he was avoiding this one.

"Well, that's fine. You're probably going crazy over the ones that you have. Haha. How long can you last"

Mush laughed and held out her hand.

“If you want, sell your soul to me. Then, I will give you rewards. Way more than what you’re trying to achieve.”

Sungmin turned around without answering. The soul that bypassed the principle of life. Mush wanted that.

But Sungmin didn’t plan on giving up his soul to Mush.

At least, not yet.

Chapter 36

Training (2)

Effort.

Sungmin didn't like that word too much. Even if he worked hard enough, he couldn't do as much as the other geniuses. But that didn't mean that he wasn't working as hard as them.

Therefore, the starting line is different. Sungmin had a different starting line than the other geniuses. The geniuses started way in front of him. Even so, their speeds were different. If Sungmin crawled, they were running. If he ran, they were riding.

Therefore, he never liked that word. Effort couldn't bring you success or anything.

He didn't like it.

But he pitied it.

It wasn't that he didn't work hard in his past life. He practiced third rate martial arts and tried to level them up. He tried to survive.

But what about now?

He couldn't say that he had a different starting line now. Sungmin had experience. He had Wijihoyn's help. He had the Potion that helped him. He was now in Mush's mountain with Sogo as his teacher.

It wasn't a matter of the starting line.

It was a matter of the speed.

Strength. Haste. Amethyst Cloud. High Heavens. Shadowless. Everything was done with precision.

Effort.

That was what he needed now.

Everyday was like hell to him. Food and water was terrible. He was scared of sleeping. Dreams were terrible. Weight slowed him down. If it weren't for Fatigue Recovery and Mental Cleaning, he wouldn't survive in this mountain. No, he had to consider Sogo first then.

If it weren't for her, Sungmin wouldn't have survived.

Sogo said "You can forget grudges, but don't forget kindness." That was etched in his heart.

He had gratitude towards Scarlet and Sogo. He was going to repay them in some way. That was another goal for life. He couldn't die before repaying them.

One day, Two day. One week. One month.

Sungmin's body was getting faster. The 3rd level of Shadowless was helping him forget happiness.

The basics ran, na, and zhe was perfectly etched into his body. Using that, he was getting to naturally mix the basics as well as the steps to High Heavens. When it was that time,

Sungmin dropped down and cried. It was as if a huge wall was broken down. It was a wall of limits.

He got to understand happiness.

He could use the spear like this. His body can be moved like this. Time passed. It became one month and then two months. His voice was gone, but he still made sounds. Sounds with the spear. Sounds with moving the body. Sungmin ran continuously through the heaviness. He used the Amethyst Cloud before he was scared of nightmares, and when he did wake up, he used the Amethyst Cloud again.

His energy supply was increasing. The energy from Wijihoyun and the potion was integrating faster into his body, and the nature of the mountain helped the process.

"You, you're still here?"

It was about a year since he came.

Plam came over.

Sungmin put down the spear. He didn't say anything and just looked at Plam. Plam seemed to not like Sungmin's face. He walked towards him.

"I thought you wouldn't survive half a year, and yet you survived a year."

He only stared at Plam but didn't say anything. Maybe it was the year of training. Sungmin could somewhat feel the power of Plam.

'Genius...'

That person. Sungmin couldn't think of the plane that Plam was on. Instead of despair, that made Sungmin feel more in awe.

"You must have quite the spirit for a person without any talent. No, that's not it. You don't even have that much spirit. If it weren't for Sogo, you would have already died before then."

Plam spit down, twisting his lips. Sungmin didn't show signs of trying to refute that. It was true. What was the point of refuting it. One year. It was true that Sungmin was stupid and rash.

"Are you ignoring me?"

Plam said loudly. Sungmin kept swinging his spear. He started again from the ran, na, and zhe.

'Look at this...?'

Plam's eyes opened. The ran, na, zhe that Sungmin was showing was much cleaner than half a year before. It wasn't just that either. The spear techniques mixed with the basics looked pretty decent.

"I guess even idiots can learn after a while."

Plam remarked. Remark all you want. Sungmin kept swinging, not caring at all. One year in this mountain was doing much more than 13 years in his previous life.

“But, is that only it for having 5 penalties?”

Plam laughed and snickered. The rewards increased with the number of penalties. Plam told Sungmin that.

“That’s trash. Should I tell you? Hmm?”

Plam’s laughter became louder. To Sungmin, he didn’t really hear anything. Sungmin’s mind was already focused on the spear techniques.

Seeing that Sungmin was ignoring him, Plam’s face had irritation plastered on it. Quickly, he stretched his foot. Before Sungmin even stopped his spear, Plam moved his hands. Tap! He grabbed the spear.

“Why are you ignoring me?”

Plam spit out, looking at Sungmin. Sungmin sighed and moved back. Before Sungmin pulled out his branch, Plam shook his head heavily.

“Just say. I can understand by seeing your mouth.”

‘What skill’, Sungmin thought and moved his mouth.

Why are you bothering me?

“That’s what I want to do.”

Then I can ignore you as well.

“No, you can’t. A person like you can’t ignore me.”

Great personality. Sungmin sighed.

I don’t want to talk to you.

“Why? Because your talent is nothing compared to mine?”

Not really. That’s your talent. There’s no reason to be sad about what you have.

“Why do you sound like you understood something? It doesn’t suit you.”

Plam smirked. He put down Sungmin's spear that he held in his hand and moved back a few steps, and he held up his hands.

"See. You can't do this?"

Plam's hand twirled around. It was something that he had seen before. It was a sword dance.

"Isn't the world unfair? You and I have the same age, but I can do everything that you can't do. Even if you work hard, you only have the speed of a snail. Maybe just a little faster."

Plam laughed loudly. Sungmin looked at Plam's face. This b*tch. Saying this stuff. Sungmin looked at Plam irritatedly and moved his mouth.

I don't care.

"Lies."

Plam laughed loudly at Sungmin's answer. Plam put away his spear and shook his head.

"Useless effort. If you keep working, you'll only fall in more despair. Yes. Go ahead. I like when you fall in despair."

Plam turned his body. Sungmin didn't care about Plam anymore. He left, and Sungmin kept swinging.

It was quiet after the sounds were gone. The surroundings weren't lonely but normal. He focused on the targets of his swinging. His spears had no talent but had longing. Sungmin longed for faster and lighter. No, what he wanted was complete freedom in his spear.

He didn't care about weight. He didn't care about speed. He just wanted to put the High Heavens in the spear.

It felt trivial.

His goal was so small and trivial. Beating Wijihoyun. Yes. When he beat her. What afterwards?

That thought quickly disappeared as well.

Finally, nothing was left in his mind. No, just one. The martial arts that he didn't have in his past life were left. High Heavens, Amethyst Cloud, Shadowless... these three filled his head.

A day went by. Two days went by. A week went by. A month went by. Mush came over. To a new penalty, Sungmin answered immediately.

Hearing.

He started to hear random noises. It was a terrible penalty that made sleeping worse. Sungmin kept starting to work harder on his spear technique. It was better that way. The annoying noise went away when he was swinging.

Scarlet and Bejun left the mountain. They must have gotten what they wanted in just a year. Sungmin's world became even quieter. There was only a few times when he wasn't alone. With Sogo, and sometimes, with Plam.

Plam didn't seem to like Sungmin. He kept trying to fight with him on weird things, and Sungmin ignored him. It was easy. Sungmin couldn't hear anything. When Sungmin started to ignore him, sometime later, Plam didn't come over anymore.

Silence.

Sungmin woke up from his sleep

It was a nightmare. He couldn't scream, but it was the same as before. Sungmin picked up his spear. He walked the forest and stopped at the place where he always trained. Sogo was there. The year that they spent together. Sungmin grew for a year, but Sogo didn't. She felt a bit more gaunt than a year ago.

She lifted herself up. Like Sungmin had 2 more penalties, she did too. Her left eyes didn't work anymore and she started to hear noises like Sungmin.

[Did you have nightmares?]

Sungmin nodded his head, and then he lifted his spear.

And like he always did...

He swung it.

Chapter 37

Training (3)

“You’re unique.”

Mush muttered. Sungmin didn’t hear anything, but Mush was different. Sungmin stopped and turned around. Mush was crouching and looking at Sungmin.

“It’s been a year and a half. You’re going to need another penalty.”

Time passed fast. Sungmin swung away his hair. What should he get this time.

He had 6 right now. That was unique. There were many people who stopped here, but not many people succeeded and left.

“You’re the first out of any No Classes here.”

That was true. No normal No Classes would be like this. Then what about martial artists and magicians?

“They don’t do this either.”

Mush laughed. Most people didn’t try to train in this mountain. No, if they did, they wouldn’t have survived. That was true for a lot of people. People needed desperation in this place. If they didn’t have that, they wouldn’t be able to survive here.

“If I was being honest, I thought you wouldn’t have survived half a year.”

Yes. Sungmin bitterly smiled. If it weren’t for Sogo, he wouldn’t have survived half a year.

“Maybe it was because you died already. What do you want to get that you’re working this hard?”

Mush wondered that seriously. She had seen many things as a God in this mountain, but there was no one like Sungmin. He died and came back to life. That wasn’t

common.

A better life

Sungmin mouthed.

A goal to surpass

And continued.

I want to see the end.

And he answered that. Everyone said that. It was more of a longing than a goal. End.
Mush muttered.

“The end of what?”

Martial arts.

“You’re a human so what are you wanting to see. Humans don’t have that long to live.
You’re going to have to become an immortal if you want that.”

Mush muttered. Therefore, it was impossible. It wasn’t easy to surpass the principle
of death. It was possible, however.

“There’s always a chance, but that’s only just a chance. Usually the ones who do have
talent, and those people are called geniuses. There are only a few geniuses that
surpass death. There could be one person out of thousands of years. Do you think you
can do that?”

I don’t know.

He didn’t say that he couldn’t.

Sungmin changed. Humans change. Like Wijihoyun said, Sungmin changed. He knew
that he had no talent, but he didn’t want to feel failed.

He hated effort.

Now he liked it a bit.

“...You’re unique.”

Mush muttered. She came closer to Sunmin.

“Gods are unpredictable. That is true for all Gods. Yes, this is only my unpredictability. I’m not saying that.”

Mush muttered something unknown. Sungmin stopped swinging. He suddenly felt strange feeling at the words Mush muttered

“And I’m talking to myself.”

It was like an excuse to someone. Mush narrowed her eyes and looked at Sungmin.

“There is no coincidence. At least, not in Eria.”

What?

Sungmin asked. Mush turned around. It was to not see Sungmin’s question.

“Eria summoned humans randomly from places. There are unique people. Eria doesn’t ask anything of them. Just to live. That is all.”

That... he knew. The unfairness of this world. But why? He tilted his head and looked around.

“That is the same for all otherworlders. ‘Skill.’ That makes it easy to learn something. There is a reason for why that exists.”

What is she saying? Sungmin wondered but couldn’t ask. Looking at her, she didn’t seem like she would answer him anyway.

“Yes. There is a purpose. Like there is a purpose for your soul to defy the principle, there must be a reason for why you came back. Even though it might be just a well wrapped coincidence.”

There was something. Sungmin shut his mouth. Mush wasn’t looking at her. Like she said, she was talking to herself.

“There must be something important that would occur if you came back. If you came

back, you must prepare. To be the person that you were fated to be.”

Yes. That is it. Mush muttered. She stopped but didn’t turn around. She instead looked up at the sky.

“Stop. This is my territory. If you don’t want to disappear together, then don’t come here.”

Mush warned. There... was a cold feeling. Sungmin held his breath. When she turned around, Sungmin lost that feeling.

“When you leave this mountain. Go to Dremur and say to the God of time Denis that Mush sent you there.”

God of time? What is that?

Sungmin asked. He had memories, but he didn’t have any memory of a Time God. Mush laughed and pointed at him.

“Well, humans wouldn’t know.”

Sungmin’s mind brightened up. He quickly put his hand towards his head. A memory that he didn’t have stuck deeply in his mind. Sungmin didn’t know where Dremur was, but he now knew of it. And then, he knew of the existence of the God that was living there.

Why?

Sungmin asked. Mush laughed at that.

“Didn’t I say. I’m unpredictable. Just unpredictability. I wanted to say things to myself.”

She crouched down again.

“You’re a unique and funny fellow. It seems like there is no chance of it... why did you come back? There might have been a mistake. But i know there are no coincidences in this world... and also, you survived my tests.”

Test?

Living in this mountain? Sungmin tilted his head. Yes. That was a test by itself. The penalties got harder everyday he was here.

“Plam.”

She opened her mouth.

“Plam is the test from Mush.”

He didn’t understand straight away.

Plam. The trainee that lived here for the longest time. Sogo as well as Bejun said. Don’t meet up with Plam. You will fall into despair. That was true. When he first met Plam, Sungmin fell into despair. The disparity in talent. The talent that a true genius had.

“Plam exists to make people fall into despair. The human that doesn’t fall into despair tries to move forward for the possibility. You... did better than I expected. You tried to push yourself harder for your lack of talent. That’s wasn’t the right choice and was a stupid one. But it wasn’t a wrong choice as well. I actually like your stupid choice.”

He sort of had an idea.

There was no one that he knew of named Plam in his past life. It was a strange thing. With the talent of Plam’s, he would have succeeded in spreading his name easily. But why did he not hear anything about him. Why was he here. And even as he was here for a long time, why did he not seem to have any penalties.

It was a simple answer. He didn’t exist. It was the test of Mush. That was the purpose of Plam. That... was always true. Plam tried to make you feel hopeless every time he was here.

He laughed at Sungmin’s effort. He laughed at Sungmin's training. Don’t do this because you have no talent. You can’t do anything no matter how hard you work. That arrogant idiot only wanted to see Sungmin feel hopeless.

I... see.

Sungmin answered. He knew. Plam was for that purpose. Only another test. He noticed for a while, Plam didn’t come anymore.

It was when he started to not feel hopeless anymore.

“You did well.”

Mush laughed.

“That thing I told you... is a reward for passing my test. What you get out of it is, of course, up to you.”

Mush lifted herself up.

“Sogo. Don’t tell that mute girl about Plam. If you do, i’ll have to kick you both out of this mountain...”

Mush left after that. Sungmin stood there trying to think. There was no coincidence. The otherworlders. There must be reason for their summoning. For the same reason.

There was a reason that he came back.

‘Me?’

Sungmin blankly stared down at his hands.

A second rate martial artist. C rank mercenary. A No Class who had nothing. 13 years of nothing.

There was a reason that I came back?

One thing came out of this chaos.

If you came back, you must prepare. To be the person that you were fated to be.

The words were stuck in his head. Sungmin picked up his spear in silence.

Even if he couldn't be the person that he was fated to be.

There was an end that he wanted to see.

Chapter 38

Descending Down the Mountain (1)

The 6th penalty.

He chose smell. Like taste, smell didn't work like not smelling anything. A human could throw up with just the smell. Sungmin knew that. Because of the terrible smell that he felt during the first day, he threw up many times.

It was harder getting used to the bad smell than the taste. Because of both, food was especially terrible.

But he ate.

He swallowed the blech, closed his eyes, and tried to ignore the taste and smell of the food.

[Did you have to take smell?]

Sogo asked. She looked terrible. She was also had 6 penalties. The first time he met Sogo, she had penalties of speech, telepathy, and her left arm. She had gotten 3 more since then. She couldn't use her left eye, and she was hearing things in her ear.

And taste.

Sogo knew the harshness of food now. It was inevitable that she would be disheveled. Sungmin bitterly smiled and answered.

[Better if it's harsher.]

Sogo didn't ask anymore. She knew that harsher sufferings had more meaning.

But humans.

They knew the answer sometimes but didn't take it. They know that it's too painful. Yes, that was humans. Even if it's the answer, if harsh pain comes with it, they would

avoid the correct answer.

Sogo was like that. She picked up voice and telepathy first. That wasn't too harsh. She didn't talk too much, and she would write if she needed to. It was uncomfortable when she couldn't use her left arm, but it wasn't too bad. It was the same for her left eye.

But taste and hearing were different. How bad it was having your senses away from you... Sogo was understanding it now. She was regretting it much. To take something else. That regret.

To be honest, she didn't need to take such harsh sufferings.

She had talent. Even though it was nothing compared to Plam because he was the avatar of Mush, but Sogo was considered a genius as well.

But not Sungmin. Since he wasn't, he had to take such sufferings. There was the difference. Sogo was unable to pass the despair that Plam gave. Sungmin took the despair and made his path, while Sogo attempted to avoid it. It was strange. Sungmin who wasn't talented was able to fight through the despair, while the genius Sogo avoided the despair.

[I have something to tell you.]

Sungmin couldn't tell Sogo about Plam's existence. Because of what Mush said. Sogo... did she pass Plam. Sungmin was curious but couldn't ask to her.

[Yes?]

[I think I'm going to leave this mountain.]

Sogo answered. He... was slightly surprised, but wasn't panicked. It was already 2 years since she came in this mountain. It didn't seem that long, but seeing the penalties and the talent of Sogo, she would have gotten what she wanted in the 2 years.

[I see.]

Sungmin breathed and wrote down. She was leaving. If that was true, Sungmin would be the longest lasting trainee here.

[I feel a bit bad about leaving you and Plam here alone in the mountain... or do you

want to leave with me?]

[No, I want to stay.]

Sungmin answered. He knew now because of her answer. She didn't know Plam's existence.

[...I see.]

Sogo nodded. She didn't offer anymore. Also, Sungmin didn't try to stop here. Seeing Sogo's personality, if he asked her to stay, she would definitely stay for him.

He knew that, so he didn't asked. Sogo had things to do herself.

[Right now?]

[Yes.]

Sogo nodded. Sungmin stayed silence and asked.

[Can we meet again.]

[Probably. I'll be wandering after I leave this mountain... but we'll be able to meet. Defeiniety.]

Sogo answered. No, he will defeintly be able to meet her. Sungmin will go for her in 7 years.

[How long are you going to stay here?]

[I don't know.]

Sungmin answered. He wanted to stay here for 2 years. After that, he was going to go to Behengeru to become a mercenary.

But he didn't know anymore. There was nothing that he needed to do when he went to Behengeru. The only thing that he could do was to get a spot like his previous life.

But he wasn't content yet.

He didn't get to the point that he wanted to. He wasn't sure that he would be able to reach the end of martial arts even by staying, but he wanted to at least fulfill his goal that he had in mind

[...Don't overextend yourself.]

She hesitated and wrote that down. Sogo didn't feel right about this. They were all the same. No Classes. Martial artists. Magicians. Everyone was summoned here. They lost their family and friends.

Pupil.

Sogo looked at her pupil. It's been a year since they've met. The young student grew a lot in a year. Even with the taste penalty, Sungmin didn't shy away from eating. It was to grow his body. It worked pretty well, and he was close to Sogo's height now.

Sungmin did look a way older than his age. Yet, there was a bit of youth still hidden in his face. Sogo felt a bitter feeling as she sighed.

She wanted to help more. Give advice. It wasn't that she didn't give advice and help Sungmin.

She just wanted to help more.

[I'm fine.]

Sungmin wrote.

[If it weren't for your help, I wouldn't have been able to survive in this mountain for a few months. It was because of you that I'm here now.]

Sungmin never felt this feeling. Like he felt gratitude towards Wijihoyun, he felt gratitude to Sogo.

[Thank you.]

Sungmin wrote. Sogo came closer to Sungmin. She used her right arm to pull Sungmin in. Sungmin was surprised and attempted to move away, but Sogo didn't let him go.

For a while... she stayed like that with Sungmin in her arms. Her right arm was sliding

down Sungmin's back. Sungmin felt the warmth of her hand, her hair, and her body. His face was burning hot.

Sogo let Sungmin go. She wrote down on the ground.

[You'll be able to do well. You... are one of the hardest person that I've met.]

[What does it mean by hard?]

[Doesn't break.]

Sogo answered.

[You never gave up. You despaired at Plam, but you never gave up. I... think that's incredibly. Not giving up, working hard. You're amazing.]

[It's not that much.]

Sungmin answered. Hard. Doesn't break. That... wasn't true. Sungmin was already broken many times. He just survived it.

[I'm not hard. I've already been broken. Even now. And in the future as well.]

[It's fine if you aren't. It doesn't matter if you've been broken many times. What's important is not falling hopeless. You're... amazing.]

Sogo shook her head and wrote.

[I don't believe in God.]

That seemed like a paradox. This was the Mountain of Mush. A place where a God of suffering exists. To train here without believing in God.

[But I want to pray to them. To have you fulfill your goal. To not have you completely break.]

Sogo wrote that and put down her branch. Sungmin wanted to say more, but seeing that she put down her branch, he stopped. It was until here. Sogo looked calm.

If they continued, they would only have attachments.

“Then.”

Sogo’s mouth opened. The penalties had ended. Her left eye opened, and her left arm started to move. Sogo breathed deeply. And in a low voice,

“I hope we meet again someday.”

She said farewell.

She left.

From a time, Sungmin ate with Sogo. She was always there when Sungmin was training. She looked at his martial arts and gave him plenty of advice.

She was a kind person. If Wijihoyun’s teachings were harsh, Sogo’s were nice. He didn’t mean to compare them, but the teachings of both were different and gave him much left.

That Sogo had left. Like Wijihoyun did.

Sungmin walked the mountain alone. Lonely... was what he felt. It was a while since he felt this way. He had felt loneliness when Wijihoyun left. But there were people there for him. Hans was there, Jack was there, Lula was there.

But not anymore.

There was no one here. There would be other trainees, but he had no intention of meeting them. Bejun and Scarlet had already left months ago. Sogo left today. Sungmin wanted the company of people.

People cannot live alone.

Don’t forget morals. Don’t forget favors.

He had heard that before. He had heard it... from Hans. People can’t live alone. He couldn’t understand that when he first heard it from Sogo, but not anymore.

He wouldn’t have survived if he was alone.

‘Ah.’

Sungmin stopped his footsteps. A thought came into his mind. It was already night. His body was heavy, his ears heard noise, and his nose had terrible odors. Yes. It was the same old 'me'

But something was different.

His mind changed. A wall that he kept up was being broken. His mind brightened. It was a short but long lasting feeling of freedom. Sungmin breathed heavily. In that moment, there was no smell, no weight, no noise.

The world would change if 'I' change.

Sungmin laughed in the world of loneliness and solitude

Chapter 39

Descending Down the Mountain (2)

When Sogo left the mountain, Sungmin was completely alone. His body was still heavy and was plagued by noise. The nightmares were constant, and then Sungmin started to remember them as well.

They were unique. There was one that he was fighting with monsters and finally succumbed to his injuries. There was one where he wandered a labyrinth with a monster. Just running away, just falling, just getting tortured, there were many.

There was no pain in dreams. If someone said that to him, Sungmin would have slapped him hard.

Sungmin received pain in nightmares. It went away when he woke up, of course. Dreams were dreams, and reality was reality. But his memories still stayed the same. Nightmares didn't hurt less even when he knew that they were nightmares.

The hardest one was.

"You didn't change at all."

The meeting with Wijihoyun was a nightmare. 10 years passed, and they met in Tobes. Wijihoyun was... just as he expected.

But sungmin didn't change at all. If Wijihoyun was what Sungmin expected, Sungmin wasn't what she expected.

"What did you do during 10 years?"

He answered. He did everything. He tried his hardest. But Wijihoyun wasn't convinced. She looked at Sungmin coldly.

"That was your limit," she muttered.

It wasn't physically painful, but the emotional pain was heavy. It was something that

he was afraid of in real life. He felt horrified at his own weakness and uncertain future.

What if... that actually happened.

Fatigue Recovery. Mental cleansing. Magic was only just a short prevention method. It was impossible to completely overcome nightmares. And they continued.

He couldn't stop Sogo's death.

That dream.

It was horrible.

He wanted to stop it. He didn't know what happened in that dungeon. He wasn't there. But what was true was that in 7 years, Sogo went in there with Wijihoyun. And died.

Sungmin didn't think that Wijihoyun was a bad person. But she wasn't a good person either. She was a neutral. Wijihoyun would kill without hesitation.

He didn't know what happened in there. But most likely, Wijihoyun had no choice but to kill the others.

'I.'

Sungmin rubbed his headache. Mental Cleansing. Maybe his mind gotten used to magic. Or the nightmares got stronger. His mind didn't get any better.

'He needed to be as strong as her.'

That couldn't be the answer. The answer... was to stop Sogo from entering. But Sungmin knew that not everything went how people thought it would. So he needed to prepare for the worse.

Not even to win against her. Just to stop Sogo's death. He only had 7 years.

Too short.

Summer came. The Cicadas started to cry. Sungmin couldn't hear them, but... he could see them on the trees. The noise in his ears could sound similar to their cries.

The cicadas lives 10 years underground to become a full grown cicada. Yes, even bugs used that much time to grow.

7 years. Isn't that a short time for a larva to grow into an adult. What could he do in 7 years. No, not what he could do. He had to.

The noise that he felt in the mountain was not quiet. His heavy body and terrible food was not comfortable. Nightmares made days longer. There was no one there. There could be more trainees coming in or trainees leaving, but he didn't care about them

The world changed when Sungmin changed. There was no limit to his energy supply. The spear techniques were getting better, and his High Heavens skill level was getting higher. He felt freedom when he used Shadowless.

But it wasn't enough.

He wanted more. Therefore, Sungmin started to work more. He slept less. He couldn't sleep much anyway. He trained harder instead of sleeping. His body's weight became heavier everyday, but his spear techniques and Shadowless became sharper everyday.

And then the next penalty.

He prepared for this. He became used to his surrounding to the point where he could walk without seeing. He put in food inside of his pocket, and prepared smoked meat so it wouldn't rot as easily.

He had gotten the penalty of his two eyes.

The world turned black. He couldn't rely on his senses. All he had left was his touch. He felt the wind against his skin. It wasn't as easy as it seemed. He had to be sharper than his sense. He used the Amethyst Cloud. He survived by eating his provisions.

He could finally move after a week. His branch became his way of transportation/. He used it to walk around and swing it around the place.

After a month, he succeeded in hunting. He was happy. There was no one who could compliment him, but Sungmin was happy that he did it. It was a meaningful hunt, but the food still tasted terrible.

Memeem.

Memmem.

The voices that were in his ear was the cries of the cicada. It was their screams as well as their cries. Screams felt like Sogo's while the cries sounded like Sungmin's. His two eyes made up a black world filled with nightmares, and Sungmin forgot time's flow. He wanted to be a machine. A walking machine. A martial artist machine.

In his darkened world, he couldn't see the form of his spear techniques. Where does the spear head. The target of the spear. Where does his body head when he used Shadowless.

Do I want to be a cicada. Do I want to come out after a long period of staying underground only to cry loudly and die. No. Sungmin didn't want that. He wanted to something more. He wanted something way more.

What is that?

What do I want to become. Why am i doing this. Why am I here for. What reason did I come back for.

I.

The wind's temperature changed. It was winter, but Sungmin's daily life didn't change. Sungmin always moved in the world. He prepared for winter. Hunting wasn't hard at all. Sungmin was lonely in his world, but he didn't stop practicing or surviving.

And then half a year passed, and Sungmin received the penalty of not changing clothes. The only way of telling time was the wind's temperature and Mush's arrival.

And then 3 years passed.

It was time. Mush. Sungmin called her to him. What was it. Mush asked to Sungmin's mind. Sungmin breathed slowly and said.

I want to finish my training

Mush didn't answer right away. The ragged God looked at the trainee that was standing right in front of her.

3 years.

The reason why it was so hard to survive 3 years was because the penalties add up. Plam kept adding emotional oppression, while the trainee tried to survive through these penalties.

Not everyone who comes in this mountain leaves before they get what they want. They usually give up before that. They can't survive.

That human... that human who defied the principle. He was hardened. Sungmin's recent one year in this mountain was almost impossible to survive.

But he held on.

"Did you get what you wanted?"

Mush asked. Sungmin didn't answer. After a while, Sungmin mouthed.

If I was a genius, maybe.

He didn't get what he wanted because he wasn't genius. A bitter reality. Perhaps, it was impossible to surpass his limits.

But he saw something.

Sungmin muttered. He wasn't content with that though. More, more things he wanted. Sungmin was happy that he came back. He was happy that he surpassed death.

So he could feel something like this.

"Do you think the training was useful to you."

I wouldn't have become this me if I didn't come here.

Mush liked that answer. She waved her hand and took away all the penalties that Sungmin had.

When all the penalties were removed, Sungmin felt strange. 3 years. 3 years of heaviness disappeared from his body. His light body seemed awkward. The smell that he felt disappeared. The noise in his ear was gone.

His eyes opened.

“...ah.”

Sungmin felt his own voice.

“It’s a nice feeling.”

Sungmin looked at Mush and smiled bitterly.

Chapter 40

Descending Down the Mountain (3)

After 3 years of penalties, he felt awkward but glad. Sungmin blinked a few times and looked down at himself. He looked terrible. He lived a year without washing or changing. But he was used to the smell. He lived with it for a while. It just didn't look good.

Sungmin slowly lifted his foot. His foot... felt light. Not just his foot. His entire body felt light. Sungmin walked a few steps, and laughed quietly.

"And it's fascinating."

And muttered. He still heard the cries of cicada. It was from the real ones.

"What should I give you."

Mush muttered. To that, Sungmin turned around. Mush was standing there in a twisted position. Sungmin tilted his head after looking at Mush's thinking face.

"Give what?"

"You survived the hardships from this mountain. 3 years. Recently, there wasn't anyone like you who had survived for this long. There was no one who took as many penalties as you either."

Mush muttered and slightly laughed. A small smoke arose from beside her. A small child rose up from the smoke. It was Plam.

"As a reward for surpassing your despair, I gave you a meeting with the time god. That's up to you what you get out of the journey though."

The time god Denis. He had gotten the memories from her. He didn't know what he would get, but he was going to go there when he had time.

"That's the reward for that. For the reward for surviving 3 years... yes. I'll recommend

you to be a member for 'Ereburisa.'"

Mush nodded after while and muttered. Ereburisa. Sungmin didn't understand what she meant.

"What is Ereburisa."

"It's a mediator guild,"

Mush answered.

"A guild that you can summon from anywhere in the world."

Mush said that and lifted her hand. It was that moment.

"It's been a while. The goddess of hardships and penance."

A man appeared with a calm voice. Sungmin didn't know where he came from. At this point of view, the man just rose from the shadows of Mush. He was tall and wore a suit. He didn't look at Sungmin once and bowed to Mush.

"What help do you want"

"I didn't call you today for that. I want to recommend a new member."

Mush answered. To that, the man turned around to Sungmin. He made a slightly surprised face.

"Ah... this is... an interesting figure. The soul that defied the principle. You aren't going to sell the soul, but you're going to recommend him to be a member?"

"Yes."

"I feel he's slightly lacking..."

The man muttered.

"The soul. It's expensive, but he isn't qualified enough. Let's see... martial arts. Skills... it's not bad. Did he pass the apex yet? How long has he trained here?"

“3 years.”

“3 years of training here and just an apex master. He has diligences and perverservance but not enough talent. Goddess. You know that not everyone can be a member of the guild.”

“That’s why I’m using my recommendation pass.”

Mush answered.

“I believe a member of my quality is able to make an unqualified person a member. I don’t think there will be any problem?”

“...Hm.”

The man lifted his hands and tapped empty air, and then nodded.

“If you want. Since we have had many transactions with you... we will allow it. We will note him as a new member of the guild.”

The man said and turned around to Sungmin. He bowed down to Sungmin in a polite manner.

“A small contract will be needed. If you could... give you some of your blood.”

“...Blood.”

“Yes. Ah, this contract is only for you to be marked as a new member of the guild. I promise you on my existence that it won’t cause you any harm. Mush will be my witness for this.”

Sungmin looked at Mush. Mush slightly nodded he rhead. After getting the sign, Sungmin bit his finger slightly. Blood came out from the small wound.

“Thank you, Lee Sungmin.”

The blood dropped towards the ground but didn’t touch the dirt. It disappeared in mid air, and the man nodded.

“Your soul has been marked as a new member of Ereburisa. Whenever you want, visit

us from your mind. Then the person responsible for you will come to you.”

The man said that and looked at Mush. You can go back. After that, the man disappeared. Sungmin didn’t understand what happened and only stared at Mush. Mush shook her shoulders receiving Sungmin’s glance.

“You call them directly. It’ll be easier than hearing my explanation.”

“...Hmm...”

Sungmin thought of Ereburisa in his mind. That moment. Hwk! Someone came up from his shadows.

“Nice to meet you, Lee Sungmin. I’m called Neville. I will be responsible for you.”

It was a different man than before. The man called Neville had short hair and wore a clean suit. He bowed down to Sungmin, and Sungmin awkwardly bowed back.

“Ah... yes.”

“Is this your first time visiting here?”

Neville asked. Like Mush’s manager didn’t care about Sungmin, Neville didn’t care about Mush. Sungmin only nodded blankly at Neville.

“Then I will give a quick explanation of Ereburisa. Ereburisa is a mediator guild that acts as a mediator for everything that the customer wants. Also, Ereburisa has relationships with other guild like merchant guilds.”

Neville breathed slightly afterwards.

“If you want to buy something, we will buy the object for you. If you want to auction something, we will start the auction. Of course, it’s not for free. We will take a honest commision of 5 percent.”

To that, Sungmin couldn’t help but be surprised. The mediator guild Ereburisa. He didn’t know what a mediator guild was, but that 5 percent commision rate was extremely surprising. Most merchant and mercenary guilds had 15 percent commission, but Ereburisa only had 5.

“If you want a trade, we have connections. If you want a blacksmith, we will contact a skilled blacksmith. If you want information, we will get you information from our partner information guilds. We promise that there is no false information in any information that we sell. Ah, of course. There is an extra 5 percent commission for this as well.”

Now Sungmin started to understand what help Ereburisa gave. It would give anything that Sungmin wanted. To meet a good blacksmith, he had to go to a blacksmith guild. To get information, he needed to go to an information guild. It was easy to say, but the process was hard. Blacksmiths were stubborn and hard to convince.

It was the same for information guilds. It was hard to know if the information was true or false, but in Ereburisa, there was no false information. Of course, he couldn't completely trust that yet, but there was so much merit in the fact that he didn't have to run around the place trying to get things.

“If you want emergency money, you can pawn things to us for some money. There are other things, but instead of listening to my explanation of things, it would better if you find them out yourself.”

“...Transactions... do you sell energy potions and martial arts techniques as well? Or magic books...”

Sungmin wondered and asked. Neville smiled and nodded.

“Of course.”

Neville tapped the air a few times. Then, a small screen came up in front of Sungmin. It was similar to the status screen that otherworlders could see.

“You have a search option so try that.”

Neville said. The screen was direct. It was easy to categorize objects by type and by price. Sungmin breathed softly at the objects that they were selling.

The Big Energy Potion.

Chapter 41

Descending Down the Mountain (4)

The energy potion that was on the very top was that. The greatest energy potion of all time. From what he heard, all big energy potions were protected heavily in martial art temples and are given to the select few. That potion was an item for sale.

“The price...!”

Sungmin breathed loudly at the price. It was way more than what he expected. Neville looked at Sungmin and nonchalantly said.

“The big energy potion is best of the best potion made with alchemy. The price is fair for what it’s worth. If you take it, you will receive decades of inner strength. You can’t buy time no matter how much money you have, so decades of inner strength should be worth this price.

He could understand the price. He was just surprised at how expensive it was. Sungmin swallowed and searched up the energy potion that he had taken before. It was there. It was pretty expensive, but it was nothing compared to the big energy potion.

“There are raw energy potion that loses efficiency when taken. But I can’t recommend them to you. There are side effects to taking unrefined energy potions. So for example, if you take the millennium ginseng, the ying and the yang of your body would fall apart. You would have too much yin. So your body might fall apart. It would be a different story if you practiced a yang cultivation method.”

Nevilled advised. Sungmin looked away from the potion. It wasn’t that he didn’t want it, but the prices were way too high for him. He searched up martial arts.

There, he breathed loudly again. There were a variety of martial arts sold.

“There are many types of martial arts. The otherworlders coming into Eria are all different. The same sword technique may have a slightly different form. But they all can be called a grace technique.”

He didn't understand. Were all these grace techniques so easy to buy? No, the prices were incredibly high so he wouldn't be able to easily buy them. Neville laughed at Sungmin's shock.

"Didn't I say. We have various connections with many customers and guilds. Ah... also, if you buy a martial art with us and practice, we won't take care of any mess that happens."

He could understand what Neville meant. If he randomly used a technique that was a secret to only a certain sect, the sect would take notice. If he couldn't give a good reason for that, the sect may try to do things to confiscate the technique back.

There weren't only martial arts that he could buy here. There were magic books here as well. The organized magic from branches to small magics, Sungmin felt horrified at the objects that were being sold. He had never thought that magic, martial arts, and energy potions could be sold like this.

"...Do you need a qualification to be a member of Ereburisa?"

"That is true. The easiest way is, like you, getting recommended by another member. To be honest, being recommended doesn't completely make you a member... but Mush is a frequent customer of ours, so we slightly twisted the rules."

Neville said that and nodded his head at Mush. To that, Sungmin tilted his head. What would Mush have to sell to a guild like this?

"Souls."

Mush answered.

"The souls of the people who died in this mountain. I sold those."

Mush said nonchalantly. Sungmin's face hardened.

"You... sold the souls of humans."

"You're taking it the wrong way. This mountain is my property. The souls of the people that die here are all mine. Is there something wrong with me doing whatever I want with my things?"

Mush only asked back. Mush wasn't a person but a goddess. Morals didn't apply to her.

"Souls are a good trading object. There are many people that want human souls. The black magicians and the demonic cults. Sometimes dragon... demons. Isn't it good for everyone if you have transactions like this? It's better to selling souls to them instead of having them trying to mass murder. And also..."

Neville's eyes narrowed.

"If you want. We can give you a lot if you pawn off your soul to use. The soul that defied the principle has great value. Ah, it's only a pawn though, you can pay off the debt later..."

"Don't listen to that. If you give your soul to me, it'll be better. Don't you want talent? Like I said before, if you sell your soul to me, I can give you whatever you want."

Mush cut him off. Sungmin could understand something. They wanted his soul. The soul that defied death must have an expensive cost that he didn't know.

"I don't have any thoughts about that now."

Sungmin sighed. Mush said. He received a lot of stacks after defying the principle. It wouldn't do anything to him now, but after he died... he would suffer for ages.

Therefore, death wasn't a resting place for him. Sungmin only had a painful end.

But he didn't want to sell his soul.

"I don't have anything that I want to transaction yet. I don't have any money. Later... I will call you if I need something."

"Call me whenever. Ah, and this..."

Neville lifted his hand. Tap! As his fingers snapped, a small light enveloped Sungin.

"This is just a small thing for becoming a member of Ereburisa."

His appearance turned clean. The clothes were still rags, but it didn't leave any bad odors or have any dirtiness. It wasn't just his clothes. His hair and body that haven't been washed in a year turned clean.

“Then I’ll see you later.”

Neville’s body disappeared. Was that magic? No, everything that Neville did would be magic then. Sungmin muttered looking down at himself.

“There are so many things that I don’t know.”

“The world is big. It’s a great thing that you became a member of Ereburisa. I don’t regret giving it to as a reward.”

Mush muttered and looked at Sungmin.

“Where will you go now?”

“...i’m first going to go to Behengeru and become a mercenary.”

“A mercenary. Haha. That’s not too bad. Do whatever you want.”

Mush muttered and took steps back.

“Don’t forget what I said to myself.”

To that, Mush turned to smoke. Sungmin looked at the place where she was and looked down at himself. There are no coincidences in the world. If he came back, there was a reason why.

That kind of stuck on his mind.

From his life, there were so many coincidences. Jack and Hans. Wijihoyun. Mush and Sogo. Those were all coincidences.

But if there were no coincidences, were those meetings not coincidences?

‘I don’t know.’

Sungmin sighed and turned around.

He had to leave this mountain first.

Chapter 42

Behengeru (1)

Behengeru.

The city that Sungmin wanted to go to. He became a mercenary at this city. He was 17 and he wasn't even a third rate back then.

According to his original plan, he was going to train at the mountain for 2 years, but the plan was twisted. He trained for 3 years, and now he was 18.

That wasn't the only thing that was different. Past him was only a third rate. Now, he was already an apex master. Didn't the man from Ereburisa say that, he had already passed the apex.

Everyone would say that looking at Sungmin's age. That he was a genius. It wasn't false. Unlike Wijihoyun who was a complete genius, someone in their 10s who was a master would be called a genius.

But Sungmin.

He had a tendency to be harsh on himself. He felt it was less hurting or always think about the worst instead of trying to cheer himself. It was basically inferiority like Wijihoyun said, but he have no intention of getting rid of that.

He knew that inferiority could be help to him. The 3 years that he spent on the mountain, the inferior made him move instead of falling in despair.

A master at 18. That would be considered a genius. But in reality, Sungmin had 13 years of experience. It was experience that would help him reach the second rate easily.

That wasn't it. He had 2 grace techniques that he was bestowed upon. Like Wijihoyun said, they were techniques that guaranteed rising up at least to the apex.

Adding on to that was the No Class's growth rate and the martial skeleton. Those

increased the growth rates. And on top of that, he trained at the Mountain of Mush. He spent 3 years suffering like that.

He was a master after all that.

If he didn't go into the mountain, how long would it have taken for him to become a master. If he didn't receive the High Heavens or the Amethyst Cloud, he wouldn't have even been able to look at the limit of the apex.

'A common man... not a genius.'

Sungmin bitterly smiled and descended. Even with the 3 years that he lived here, he didn't have any attachment to this place. But he didn't dislike it either. It was nice place. In the 3 years that he spent here, Sungmin had more devotion than his entire previous life.

Sungmin used Shadowless.

The speed was faster than anything he had done before. He had practiced it multiple times but everything was practiced under the weight penalty. But now was different. His body was light and free.

He was at the 5th level of Shadowless. Amethyst Cloud was level 6 and the High Heavens was also 6.

The inner strength affected Sungmin's body. The strength that he used twirled in his body. It made his body faster and speedier. Sungmin descended in a second. He ran for a while, but his breathing was constant. Like his skills were past the apex, his inner strength increased to the point where it matched his techniques.

'He would reach Behengeru in no time.'

It would take about 4 days to get there. But if he used a speed technique, it wouldn't even take 2.

But there was no reason to hurry. He slowly started to walk in the direction. It was awkward trying to sense directions after staying in the mountain for so long, but it wouldn't hard to fix that.

He organized his thoughts. The things that he had to do.

He wanted to stop Sogo's death. There was only 6 years left until she entered the same dungeon with Wijihoyun and died. Sungmin knew that even though he was an apex master, Wijihoyun would be stronger than him no matter what.

It was obvious. Wijihoyun was already past the apex when she left Genavis. Wijihoyun wasn't probably just playing around for 3 years. And for 6 years later.

The 6 years that she would spend and the 6 years that he would spend were completely different. 6 years of a snail walking wouldn't move more than a year of a human walking.

He wondered if it was better to train more in the mountain, but he left the mountain first.

There were things he needed to get.

In half a year. The guild would get a mission to wipe out a black magician's dungeon. It was artificial, but the magician was strong so the guild received a lot of harm. They would gain many spoils after succeeding, however.

There was one thing that he wanted. The barding Devilnark. It was an armor that a C rank mercenary received by coincidence. It was later classified as a A rank artifact, and the guild couldn't even take it because the armor made a blood pact with the user.

A C ranked mercenary rose quickly to the point of apex with just the armor. He didn't know what the armor did, but he had to get it first.

Luckily, Sungmin remember how to get it. The mercenary that gotten it always spoke about how his life changed when he got drunk. Sungmin listened carefully to him in the corner of the bar.

The opportunity that would change his life. Sungmin was waiting for that in his past life.

With his current skill, he would be able to get an S rank in any city's guild. If a martial artist was past the apex, he would be rewarded an S rank.

An S rank would be able to choose his missions. He had funds coming in monthly, and there would be sanctions on him if he didn't take any missions. S rank mercenary had that much worth.

After he became an S rank, he was going to enter other missions before taking the mission with the black magician's dungeon. If it was possible, he wanted to get the other artifacts as well in there.

Sungmin started to get ready for sleep when it became dark. He quickly caught two rabbits and lit a fire. Sungmin breathed loudly as he placed the rabbits on top of the fire.

To be honest, Sungmin was waiting for this moment. He didn't have the restriction of taste anymore. And smell as well. Sungmin swallowed as he felt the odor of the rabbits. How long was it since he felt this smell. The meat was roasted quickly. Sungmin immediately picked it up and took a bite.

It was delicious.

It was just meat with no seasoning, but it was delicious to the point that he was about to cr. It was nothing compared to the horrors of eating in the mountain. He then understood how happy eating was.

And he promised himself. Even if he went back in the mountain, he wouldn't take the taste penalty ever again.

Sleep was comfortable with no nightmares. He did wake up a few times in his sleep like a habit, but he wasn't afraid of sleeping back again. Like that, Sajangnim was able to rest for a long time without nightmares. The headaches that he felt when he woke up wasn't as painful as before. It was the result of sleeping well.

Sungmin woke up and lifted his body. He wanted to practice his spear techniques, but it was important to get ot Behengeru first.

The next day, he arrived. His figure wasn't that clean after walking through the forest. Since he caught a few monsters on the way there and gotten spoils, he smelled with odor.

"Where did you come?"

"Genavis."

The officer asked and Sungmin answered nonchalantly. The officer wrinkled his face at that. Coming from Genavis meant something simple. He was an otherworlder.

“Go in. Don’t cause any trouble.”

The officer reluctantly let him through. Sungmin nodded slightly and walked in. Behengeru. It was similar to what he had remembered from before. Sungmin felt a really , really slight feeling of gladness.

‘Where was the mercenary guild... ’

Sungmin looked at his memories and walked towards the guild.

He planned to be a mercenary right away. He got slightly lost, but he started to have memories come back. Sungmin stayed here in his past life for the longest, so it wasn’t that hard to find his way around.

Just he didn’t have that many good memories. Sungmin’s life here wasn’t that happy. He had to do everything to survive here. To be honest, he didn’t want to remember them.

When he stood in front of the guild.

Sungmin thought of a small memory. Small... memory. Was it the senior mercenaries that bullied him in the guild. Those people’s memories. Sungmin laughed and took hold of the doorknob.

Trivial.

Chapter 43

Behengeru (2)

Since Behengeru was a close city to Genavis, it was the first city that most otherworlders came after being summoned. Therefore, Behengeru was a big and modern city. It was the first place the otherworlders had to get prepared for survival in this world, Eria.

‘Guild.’ That was basically a direction that otherworlders went towards to survive. Merchants went to merchant guilds. Blacksmiths went to blacksmith guild's. There were many guilds, but the mercenary guild was the one that most people went to.

There weren't that hard of a requirement to get in, and becoming a mercenary meant food and living for a while.

Therefore, the door's opening of a guild could not be said to be a unique thing. Even if it was a small kid who was dirty, it was a common thing.

The mercenaries near the door spoke some words to him.

“Hey, kid. Can you work for your food?”

“Maybe if your face was better, I don't know. You look like even a mouse won't eat you.”

“Go get some food from your mom. You probably don't have one though.”

The mercenaries laughed. Sungmin didn't say anything and closed the door. Like most mercenary guilds, the 1 floor was used as a bar for mercenaries. There were many drunk people even in daylight, but most mercenaries were like that.

They used their money to live life day by day. There was no saving. Getting money required risking your life everyday.

They risked their life and survived. They did all they could. They wouldn't know they were going to die. So they would use money now. Live now.

Sungmin knew the life from experience. The beer drinking and the partying. They all reacted the same way for newcomers. If the newcomer was nothing important, it was good. If the newcomer was a skilled person, they would be jealous. Humans were like that.

Sungmin walked across the hall. The beer smell increased as he went inside. There were a few mercenaries that were naturally touching girl's breasts. They moved their hands rapidly, and the girls moaned as to make the men happy.

Sungmin didn't give them any glances. When he stopped, he was at the bar table. There were a few mercenaries that looked pretty formal. But they didn't care about Sungmin. They only talked to themselves.

The bartender was the same. Sungmin knew who he was. He did come here a year later, but the bartender's face was the same.

"I want to be a mercenary."

Sungmin opened his mouth. To that, the bartender looked at him.

"Did you get a invitation?"

The bartender was a clean middle aged man. He didn't have a shadowy figure, but his eyes were narrow and sharp. Sungmin shook his head to the question, and the bartender nodded as he knew the answer.

"Go to the 2nd floor. They take requests there."

Sungmin knew that as well. The reason why he talked to him was to make an impression to the bartender.

Baron.

That was his name. He was also the guild master of the Behengeru branch. He was a great magician.

"Excuse me."

Sungmin put his hand out. He took hold of a fork on the table. The fork's owner looked at Sungmin but didn't say anything.

Huuuuu.

Sungmin's fork turned purple. Sungmin showed the fork with a nonchalant face, and Baron's face changed.

"Ah. I must have underestimated you because you were a kid."

The owner of the fork said. Sungmin knew who he was. He was a free mercenary. He wasn't a martial artist, but he was an S rank with similar skill.

"...Martial artist."

Baron sighed and muttered. He put down his glass. The mercenaries muttered to themselves. Sungmin put an aura around the fork and that meant that he was a apex master that knew how to use his powers well.

"Sit here."

Baron pointed to a chair. Sungmin put the fork down and sat down. Baron looked at him

"Age?"

"18."

"18 and a master. A genius."

Lude who was sitting close by laughed. It was a natural reaction. A person with a master skill before their 20s was usually a genius. Sungmin felt slightly bitter because he knew he wasn't.

"How long has it been since you were summoned?"

"About 4 years?"

"4... why did you not become a mercenary. Did you come straight away?"

"No, I left 3 years ago. I travelled for years."

"Yes?"

Baron nodded. Guilds shard information. If he wanted to, he could find what Sungmin did in Genavis.

“Why do you want to be a mercenary?”

“It’s easy to be and has a lot of freedom.”

“True. Mercenaries are free. Especially with high ranks.”

Baron answered. Low ranked mercenaries had to take missions to survive, but high ranked didn’t have to. Guilds gave them money and high ranked missions gave a lot of money so high ranked mercenaries didn’t have a hard time living.

“I forgot to ask your name.”

“Lee Sungmin.”

“You must be a martial artist?”

“I’m a No Class.”

Sungmin said truthfully. He didn’t want to cause any suspicious by telling lies.

“No Class?”

Baron was surprised. Not just him, but everyone in the table was surprised.

“A No Class got a skill of a master in just 4 years..... What a genius...”

Lude muttered like he couldn’t believe it. Sungmin didn’t react. Baron spoke.

“...we usually have a test, but we don’t need one for masters.”

Baron muttered and gave a paper.

“First... let’s put a contract. You’re mostly an S rank if you’re a master, but we need to test your skill.”

“Yes.”

Sungmin signed the contract. Baron looked at the unquestioning Sungmin. He was slightly surprised at the fact that Sungmin wasn't asking anything.

There was no reason to. Sungmin knew what mercenaries did. Sungmin sighed and gave back the contract.

"...If you want, we can contact you with a leader of a squadron of mercenaries.

A legion of mercenaries was a squad. A strong squad had that much power that they could first pick some good missions.

"No, it's fine."

He refused. There wasn't just positives in that. Usually the mercenaries in the squad took their commissions out of the missions. That wasn't a bad thing. If the squad could do more positives, commissions wasn't that big of a deal.

Just, there was no reason for Sungmin to be in a squad. It was better to be a free mercenary instead of being stuck in a squad.

"Yes, that's better. There's no stupid fights either."

Lude laughed. Baron didn't ask anymore.

"Did you get a hotel?"

"No."

"Then use the empty room on the 4th floor. And we will give you your test tomorrow."

Do you want to drink? Baron asked. Sungmin shook his head.

"I'm too young."

"Funny answer."

Baron laughed. Sungmin ignored the glances and moved up to the 4th floor. It was the high ranked mercenaries room, so Sungmin had never been here before.

It was a complete different place. Sungmin looked for an empty room. There was a

room with the keys on the door, and Sungmin picked a close door to him.

He went inside and looked at the place. It was large. There was a bathroom and a shower. Hot water existed. The living room wasn't hot or cold. Temperature magic probably existed. There were so many things.

Sungmin closed the door.

He would get a missions. He didn't know, but Sungmin would become an S rank if he succeeded.

"Neville."

Sungmin called him. And then, out of his shadows, Neville came out.

"Did you call?"

Neville bowed.

"I heard that you have missions as well."

"We may give missions to customer in the mercenary guilds. Do you need one?"

"No, not yet. Is there missions for an s rank?"

"Of course. There are many mercenary customers. S rank is the lowest rank we can find for you."

It should be. To become a member, people had to have requirement. If it weren't for Mush, Sungmin wouldn't have been a member. Therefore, all the members were S rank or higher.

'SS or SSS. Monsters... '

The limit was mostly an SS. An SSS ranked mercenary were for people who had completely surpassed the limit.

He had only heard of 3 SSS rank mercenary. Was it possible to get there?

"Thank you."

“Of course. Call me whenever.”

Neville disappeared. Sungmin fell in deep thought. This was the reason why he didn't want to be in a squad. He could also get high ranked missions through the mediator guild.

‘Half a year.’

Sungmin was going to work hard as a mercenary. He was going to successfully finish his test tomorrow and then do high ranked missions. He might be able to get to SS rank like that.

But before then.

He would have to get the barding from the black magician's dungeon.

Chapter 44

Ogres (1)

Ogre

There were many monsters in Erie. Ogres were one of them, but they were one of the stronger monsters that walked on the ground with 2 legs. They had a resistance to magic, and they had a thick skin that was really strong against attacks.

They were also very intelligent so it was a pain trying to fight them off. There were even some ogres that used magic.

The guilds ranked the monsters in Erie by difficulty, and if the mercenaries of that rank could beat the monsters. The orcs were about rank E and the ogre were about rank A.

Sungmin had never gotten a mission about a ogre conquest. They were strong monsters. He knew his life was important.

‘Ogre’

Sungmin touched his chin. It was the mission for his skill test. There was information about an ogre in the forest in Behengre, and the villagers gave a request to conquest them

“Do you need to come with me?”

The wagon rode on. He asked Lude who was sitting in front of him. To that, Lude smiled widely.

“I’m not busy so I asked the president. If I can see you at wor.”

“Are you suspicious that I might do something?”

“No, that’s not it. Your aura yesterday was the real thing. Just... curiosity, I should say. Me, the president, we all have a curiosity towards you.”

Lude laughed at that. He was a free mercenary not in a legion so all he had was time. Sungmin felt awkward that Lude was being so cheerful towards him.

He knew Lude. He saw him a few times before. But he had never had any connection with him. The S ranked Lude was a figure outside his world. The Cranked Sungmin had no business with him

The first floor bar. Sungmin... was the one of the people who were drinking with the girls. Looking at the high ranked people like Lude, having jealousy towards them but too afraid to say anything.

That person was being nice to him. He didn't know what Lude was up to, but he didn't push him away. People couldn't live alone. Sungin knew that from the Mountain of Mush. Sogo taught him that.

"I'm not suspicious of your skills, but you're young. It's only been 4 years since you came here?"

"So you're worried that I might make a mistake."

"Yes. Don't be too hurt. The president and I, I want to make sure you're safe. It's not common that there's a person like you coming here."

It wasn't just curiosity. But it wasn't just niceness either. Sungmin looked at Lude and back outside. The background was nice.

"You're silent for your age. Are you usually like this?"

"Yes."

That wasn't true. Just, it was the result of the penalty of silence from the mountain. He was used to it.

The mountain gave many things to Sungmin, but they weren't all positives. His senses were off. He was well trained about feeling with his skin, but his smell or hearing wasn't trained at all.

He also didn't have any experience with real fighting. It was lonely in the mountain. Since trainees couldn't hurt others, he couldn't fight with trainees as well. He had experience from his past life, but the past him and now him were two completely

different people.

He had never faced an ogre before. He couldn't rely on experience anymore.

"Have you fought with an ogre before?"

"Never even see one."

He passed the door after the sun went down. Listening to the conversation, he would have to go half a day more to the forest.

"But I have the basic information. We'll arrive at night at this rate. Is that ok?"

"We will rest for a day in the village that asked for the conquest. If the ogre attacks at night... we'll have to be prepared.

Lude wasn't nervous. Unlike Sungin, Lude was already an S rank. He probably had experience against such things.

"Ogres aren't like typical monsters. There are some that even use magic."

"I know."

"Then that's good. There was no information about the ogre using magic here, but it's good to know for now. I'm here for your protection, but I'm not going to help you starting off. If you're going to die, then I'm going to save you." "I know."

Sungmin answered. The sun was already down and the wagon kept running. Lude opened his bag. Maybe it was a interdimensional pocket, but Lude pulled out a piece of bread from his bag.

Sungmin ate the bread with Lude. It was a normal pumpkin bread, but it felt delicious towards Sungmin who just had his taste penalty removed.

"You're using martial arts? Do you have a weapon?"

"Yes. I use the spear."

"Spear! That's good. I use the sword. I don't want to fight with a spear person. It's hard to fight against."

Lude kept talking to Sungmin. It wasn't a topic that Sungmin was really interested in. He already knew that Lude used the sword.

"You seem like a good person, but you're so boring."

Lude grumbled after talking for a while. Sungmin bitterly smiled at that."

"I'm a bit silent."

"There aren't really people that are silent when they say it with their own mouth. Usually, they just don't want to talk with you."

"That's not it."

"I'm joking."

Lude laughed alone.

The wagon arrived at night. Lude went toward and introduced Sungmin to the mayor of the village. The village head wrinkled his face.

"He looks young..."

"There's no correlation between age and skill. This kid could kill everyone in this village at the same time."

Lude laughed. The mayor was an old man with a beard. He shivered slightly at Lude's statement and looked at Sungmin. Sungmin bowed slightly towards the mayor.

"...Hm. i prepared a room. If you want, we can give you some food as well."

"Thank you."

Sungmin was directed towards an empty room inside the house of the mayor. Lude asked Sungmin.

"Do you want to drink?"

"No."

“Why. Because you’re young? That’s not funny. What kind of mercenary doesn’t drink?”

Lude grumbled and pulled out a big bottle of beer.

“IT’s good for you. Cools down your mind...”

Lude hummed and took out the bottle. Sungmin sat down looking at him.

“Don’t we have to stand guard?”

“Why do we have to do that?”

Lude put down the bottle.

“We were asked for the conquest of the ogre, not to stand guard for the village. If they give us more money, I might consider that. But there’s no point in doing something that they haven’t asked us for.”

Sungmin understood. He was also a mercenary himself.

“The only thing that moves a mercenary is money.”

Lude laughed and drank some more. To that, Sungmin nodded his head again. He wouldn’t have asked if it was the Sungmin a few years ago.

Just now...

He remember Sogo’s words about the things he shouldn’t forget. But he didn’t dwell on it too much. Sungmin and Sogo were two different people. There was no reason Sungmin had to be a nice person because Sogo was.

Sogo asked to Sungmin. Don’t forget kindness. There was no kindness given by the village people. He was a mercenary that got a job and came here to do it.

That was it.

There was no attack in the middle of the night. Like a habit, Sungin woke up early. There were no nightmares, but he was still used to waking up early.

Lude was still sleeping in the corner. It was awkward seeing an S ranked mercenary like Lude sleeping rolled up. He quietly left the room.

He breathed in the cool air outside. Going out to the chicken cage, he saw the chicken. They only looked back at Sungmin. Sungmin lifted up his spear.

Ran, na, zhe.

He practiced them. Slowly, slowly. He slowly measured his muscles. Even if it was the basics, he put all his effort in them

“Diligent.”

Lude came out after the sun was already out. He yawned loudly and came closer.

“You should have slept more. You’ll be tired when you walk around the forest.”

“I can’t sleep for a long time.”

“Was it because of my snoring?”

“That’s not it.”

Lude smiled at that. He glanced at the spear Sungmin was holding. It wasn’t anything special. Just... really old.

“You should get a new weapon.”

“I have an extra.”

“Then... that’s good. Let’s go inside.

Lude tapped his shoulders.

“We have to eat.”

“Yes.”

He put down his spear.

Chapter 45

Ogres (2)

A big city like Behengeru had a huge wall with a knight force with the lord and other soldiers. The people who lived outside the city had their reason why. They might have committed a serious crime, or they might just not have money to live there.

Sungmin had no idea why the people living here was here. There was no reason to know either though. Like Lude said, mercenaries were driven by money. He had a job and he was going to do the job.

“But it’s weird.”

Lude muttered. He wrinkled his forehead.

“This forest. It seems wide, but it’s too small for a ogre to live here...”

Sungmin agreed to that. Sungmin didn’t have any experience of fighting with an ogre, but he had the basic information about them.

Ogres were strong monsters. They were on top of the food chain in almost every forest they went to.

But why were they in this forest? It was big, but not that big.

“Ogres are omnivores.”

Lude walked.

“They eat everything. They eat things that don’t live. They don't’ judge. But they still have a preference. Humans are omnivorous, but they like meat. Ogres like meat as well.”

Lude muttered and stopped walking. He looked at the fallen tree. It wasn’t because of an axe.

“Ogres are big. They’re about 3 meters tall, and there are some that are even bigger. They eat a lot... but there doesn’t seem to anything that would satisfy the ogre's taste here.”

Lude muttered with a strange expression. Ogres liked meat. They eat humans or orcs. Even regular monsters. Ogres are such monsters that eat their own kind. Monsters were like that.

“The request came in yesterday?”

“Yes. And the ogre was spotted two days ago.”

Lude muttered.

“It’s strange. There isn't anything in this forest like a monster village. There’s no goblins clans, you know? Ogres are... smart. They're violent, but they don’t attack humans usually. Of course if they see a human, they won’t just let him go. Just ogres don’t attack first. They don't’ attack a village first.”

Lude was explaining his information to Sungmin. Lude viewed Sungmin to be a complete rookie at this. It wasn’t completely wrong. Sungin didn’t have much information about the higher ranked monsters. So, he listened carefully to Lude’s words.

“Do you know why? If they attack a village, that’s a huge problem. If they do, ogres know that a proper hunter would come and kill them. Even if this is a village outside Behengeru, it’s still people living inside the territory of the lord. The knights come and kill at the ogres. Monsters don’t want to die like us.”

“But we aren’t knights.”

“Yes. We’re mercenaries. Money. But the result is the same. We came to get the ogre. Even if they didn’t attack first.

“‘Strange.’ I don’t understand what’s strange.”

“It’s weird. There aren’t anything that would meet the taste of an ogre. There are animals... but it’s not a good place for an ogre to live for a long period of time. Ogre needs to live in a bigger place than this. There needs to be more food than this.

“Orcs and goblins?”

“Yes. Monsters can eat other monsters and no one would care.”

“Maybe the ogre is here for a short amount of time?”

“That’s stranger.”

Lude wrinkled his face again.

“There aren’t any close forests that are bigger than this. I thought maybe it was an old ogre that lost the fight for territory... but that’s weird too. You know? A ogre that lost the territory fight almost gave up on life. They attack villages and anything to eat. But the monster didn’t attack the village either.”

“Is there a reason?”

“I don’t know. Honestly, there’s no reason why we should care. It’s a strange reason why this ogre came out of here, but we should think of not why the ogre is here, but how to kill it.”

Sungmin nodded. He was already preparing his spear. It was the first time he was fighting with an ogre. It was a lie if he said he wasn’t nervous.

He wasn’t fear. It was more nervousness. It was the first practice after reaching the limit. The monsters that he killed on the way here was nothing compared to this.

‘3 years.’

There were many signs of Ogres. Big footsteps, broken trees. While he was walking, Sungmin felt a bit of disharmony.

“It’s weird.”

Sungmin muttered. Lude nodded his head.

“Its is.”

“This monster, does he poop?”

“He does. If he eats something.”

Lude wrinkled.

“Ogres are top of the class predators. They’re strong. They don’t try to hide that they are here. But... there’s no poop anywhere.”

There was no evidence of food as well. He found something else.

It was a dead deer. It was more accurately said to be a dismantled piece of meat. A meat that was dismantled by the strength of an ogre, They both looked at the corpse.

“He didn’t eat it.”

“Why?”

There wasn't evidence of eating. No bite marks. Just... dismantled.

There were many more bodies. Many animals killed.

“It’s weird.”

Lude muttered. He had experience of ogre conquests, but there wasn’t any ogre as strange as this one.”

“Is it even an ogre?”

That muttered.

Sungmin felt it in his skin. A feeling of something. Instead of his sense... Sungmin felt it in his skin. It was sign of warning in his gut.

Sungmin immediately pulled out his spear. Lude didn’t feel that. But he also immediately moved back and pulled out his sword.

Kung!

There was a voice that was coming from behind him. It was a sound. A strong... footstep

Creak! Kung! A tree was breaking. Where was something like that hiding.? Lude and Sungmin looked with horror at the ogre.

No, was that even an ogre?

“...what is that...?”

Lude muttered. It... looked off. It was an ogre by its size and looks.

But it was different. The lips were sewed together. It wasn't just that. There were some evidence of other changed. Lude swallowed softly.

It was different as well. The right hand and left hand was different. The right was the hand of an ogre, but the left hand had narrow fingers with long nails. Sungmin looked at the string that was stuck in his left wrist. The muscles. The color of the skin. And the eyes. Both eyes were different color.

“...Chimera?”

Sungmin muttered. Lude shivered at that. Chimera. It was a monster that was a mixture of two monsters. Not natural.

It was the result of a magic experiment.

“Let's run.”

Lude said. Chimera with a base of an ogre. He had never heard of something like that. If that was an ogre chimera, there was a small chance of winning. Even if Lude was a S rank, he didn't have confidence that he could win against that.

Magic was inside a chimar. The point of the experience was to find the perfect species. There was a limit that a species could have. Therefore, the chimera experience started. To mix species together to create the best species that could even exist.

Therefore, all chimeras had other surgeries in them. It was only a ogre as a base. Its strength was different depending on what kind of surgeries it had. This monster... was something that wasn't for S ranks.

“CCRRRRRR!!!”

Ogre screamed loudly. The scream turned into an echo. Now he knew why the ogre didn't eat. It wasn't that he didn't. It was that he couldn't. The ogre probably ripped apart the monsters because of the anger that he couldn't eat.

Hunger made ogres mad. ogres started to run. They had to run. Like Lude said, Sungmin started to take a step back. But the ogre was faster.

Sungmin's eyes looked at the movement of the ogre. It swung around its fist, heading towards his body. If he was hit with that, his body would be shattered and his chest would break.

He would die.

Now?

The training of the mountain passed his head. The walking everyday came into his mind. It may have been his unconscious. 'Have to.' he thought, and he moved.

This wasn't the Mountain of Mush anymore.

His body wasn't heavy.

Shadowless- first step.

Sungmin's body disappeared. Behind him. Lude's eyes widened.

Sungmin was heading towards the ogre.

Chapter 46

Ogres (3)

Speed.

It wasn't a feeling that he was used to. He was really used to the heaviness from the mountain. Even if it was only in his mind, the heaviness that he felt was always slow him down.

He had to use various types of skills to try and withstand that heaviness his strength obviously, inner power, and magic. He used Shadowless in the midst of all that, making the progress slow. His speed was nothing compared to what the skill was meant to be.

But not now.

It wasn't the mountain anymore. The heaviness that bothered him didn't exist at all. The freedom that he felt now, it even surprised him.

Don't be surprised. Sungmin calmed himself and tried to be cold. It was his first real fight after all.

ogre. Not even an actual ogre. What crazy magician made this thing, he didn't know, but it was a chimera. An chimera that had an ogre as its base. Like the ogre of perfection of species, and chimera with an ogre as its base was close to surpassing the ogre's species limits.

The eyeball followed Sungmin. The ogre couldn't scream threateningly, but the shivering lips and the moving nose was threatening him. It was an ogre, the strongest monster that moved with two feet.

That monster was looking at Sungmin like it was going to kill him. The glance itself was violence. Sungmin's skin felt the murderous intent from the ogre.

Dying.

It's trying to kill me

I can't die.

He couldn't die. That was result that he ended up with. So the body moved according. His hands grabbed the spear. He saw the left hand of the organ moving.

The hand. It wasn't an ogre's hand. Maybe another monster's hand? He didn't know what monster it was, but the sharp nails swiped towards Sungmin.

"Careful!"

Lude scared as a warning. He knew. Sungmin carefully moved without freezing. His foot slid quickly forward.

Shadowless - 2nd step.

Sungmin's shadow danced. The form of the Shadowless appeared. His step caused his shadow to dance, and his body disappeared. The ogre's nail didn't touch Sungmin's body.

Sungmin grabbed his spear carefully. Using his entire body was the best way to use his strength. He learned that from Wijihoyun, and the life in the mountain made this an easy habit for him. He added his inner strength as well

Ran, na, zhe. The zhe meant that stabbing. The Amethyst Cloud's aura filled the spear. The spear, added with the spin of his body, stabbed towards the ogre.

High Heavens. With the Chase Soul. The ogre's body didn't break even after being stabbed with that. It only moved back a few step, and Sungmin felt the power in his hands.

'Strong.'

Sungmin finally understood how strong the skin of the ogre was. He didn't think that he would be able to beat it with one strike, but he just wanted to check how strong the skin was.

'No way. There's no scratch even after being hit with that...?'

Lude was the one that was suprised. Sungmin's stab to Lude's point of view was perfect. Could I have blocked it? No, he would have chose to doge. That spear stab with

that strong of a spin, added with the aura... blocking that would have been stupid.

But that ogre did and held on. Even if ogres were strong... it was unbelievable.

‘No, that’s not a normal ogre. Chimera... is there a black magician near here?’

Lude hesitated. As for his thoughts... it would be the best trying to turn away. ogre chimera were an unknown, so there was no reason to try and fight it and face the dangers. The money that the villagers put out for the ogre conquest was nothing compared to the ogre chimera conquest.

‘No, it’s too late... crud. It doesn’t make sense.’

Lude walked forward. With the ogre already attacking, it wasn’t going to let them go easily. It was better to fight them together.

[It’s fine.]

When he was about to go, Sungmin’s voice came inside his voice. Lude was surprised and looked at Sungmin’s back. Sungmin was standing ready with his posture low.

[Are you crazy? IT’s a chimera! Not just an ogre!]

[I know.]

[Know..... F*ck! You’ve never even fought an ogre! I haven’t even seen such a monster before! Looking as it blocked that attack, it’s stronger than a twin head!]

Twin head. It was an ogre with two heads. Sungmin couldn’t feel the meaning of that. He hadn’t faced a twin head before.

[I can do it]

Sungmin answered in his head. The ogre didn’t stop as the conversation continued. The ogre with his lips sewed was out of his mind with hunger. It was afraid of being hunted so it didn’t try to invade the village, but it wasn’t a nice enough creatures to let a human go like this. Especially when it was in this hunger state.

“cRRRR!!!”

The ogre yelled loudly. The murderous intent surround his body and made the hair on his skin rise. Suddenly, Sungmin stopped breathing.

Not because of the roar, but Sungmin stopped moving.

In the stopped breathing, Sungmin moved. His shadow moved again. Sungmin pulled up a stronger aura. The Amethyst Cloud's power built Sungmin's body.

High Heavens- 2nd step.

The dancing shadows stabbed his spear. The stabbing was just like the thunder splitting the sky. Each stab had spin with power added on to it.

The thick skin of the ogre didn't make the stabbing feel like a stabbing. But it still harmed the ogre. It moved back. It's face wrinkled. The skin didn't allow the spear stabbing to go through him, but it could feel the pain. The ogre screamed again and swung his right hand

He saw it.

He didn't just see it. Slow. He saw it slowly. No, that was wrong. The attack wasn't slow. Sungmin was just too fast.

Even if the ogre's attack could kill him in one shot, there was no point if Sungmin could dodge. Sungmin spun around his spear.

The spear wasn't just a stabbing weapon. It was good to know how to use the entire spear. Sungmin's head was filled with Wijihoyun's teaching. It was already 4 years ago. Sungmin had never forgotten her.

She was his first friend and his first teacher. There was no way he could forget her.

The hair of the spear was the base of the spear, and it could also be used as a weapon. The spear head was steel.

It would hurt if he hit something with steel. Especially if there was aura along with it.

Bang! The spear became a blunt object to hit with. The spear head hit its chest. The ogre breathed carefully, Sungmin saw the face, the eyes.

It was baffled.

The other part of the spear. The head of the spear was the sharp end of the spear. The string that was below it was used to block the blood from flowing down and used to distract the opponent.

He knew. He remembered.

The string of the spear moved. The red string danced. It madd glances move that way. The color made the opponent distracted.

Sungmin wanted a distraction. The string made the ogre's eyes distracted.

Yes. This was something else. This was a false alarm

Bapp!

The sharp end of the spear broke through the ogre's eyes. The ogre screamed. Even if the skin was strong, the eyes wasn't. The eyeball that was looking at the string didn't catch the stabbing of the head.

The left eye was lost. He tried to stab it harder, but the ogre's frantic attacks made Sungmin let go of the spear and move back. Sungmin used Shadowless to take a few steps back and put his hand in his pocket.

Sungmin pulled out another spear. And then, the ogre broken the spear that was in his eyes. His left eyes was bloody.

Sungmin didn't hurry. He carefully touched the spear that he pulled out and breathed.

If he couldn't kill it in one hit, he could just wound it over again.

And Sungmin knew.

A wounded monster would be more frenetic.

'That kid.'

Lude had no words. That kid... he was a No Class who was summoned 4 years ago? That made so sense. He trained for 4 years and broke the limit. That made sense. There

were genius that could achieve that.

But the real thing was different. Real thing... was all about experience. Wasn't it the first time that he was fighting with an ogre.

'How could he be like that?'

Lude saw something other than an 18 year old inside Sungmin.

He saw an experienced mercenary.

Chapter 47

Ogres (4)

How useful would the wound to the left eye be?

No, it wouldn't be too useful. The monster would become enraged. A wound wasn't any relief to him. The ogre could easily kill Sungmin's body in one hit.

Sungmin stood there quietly and waited for the ogre's next move. The ogre stared at Sungmin while covering it eye.

And when it removed its hand, the left eye was back to normal. Regeneration. Yes. ogres had incredibly regeneration skills. That was one of the reasons why the ogre's were one of the strongest predators. A simple wound could easily be regenerated.

"It's a chimera!"

Lude screamed from behind. It's regeneration was strong enough to recover an eyes. That was because it was not just an ogre but a chimera.

'I learned something. One wound can't do anything.'

Sungmin nodded. He learned that. It was the first time he fought against a ogre, and a chimera... but he felt glad that he didn't feel too happy that he wounded it.

What to do next?

The ogre looked back at Sungmin. It was laughing at him. Is this all you can do. That was the voice that was in Sungmin's mind. The nightmares that he always felt at the Mountain of Mush, the smell that he felt.

The world turned dark. Like when he had the penalty of sight.

When he breathed, everything was gone. He saw the forest, not the mountain. The voices in his ears were gone. There was no smell. The world wasn't dark.

I wasn't heavy anymore.

The spear head was shot out towards the face of the ogre. The ogre moved quickly sideways to dodge it.

Sungmin swung his spear sideways. Bap! It hit the ogre's cheek. It was not a killing blow, but just a blow to get a reaction.

The ogre did just that. It was an ineffective attack, but it was angry that he got hit in the face. The ogre swung down his fist at Sungmin. Sungmin switched his hand position on his spear, moved backwards, and swung his spear.

Ran, na, zhe.

It was the basis of the spear technique. The zhe was the stabbing, ran was the spin. Sungmin turned the spear outwards. The first hit with sungmin's spear and was turned around by the spin.

Bang!

The ogre's hand bounced outwardly. Ran, na, zhe. He swung the spear millions of times. The spear was headed towards the chest that wasn't blocked by the arm anymore. The ogre twisted his body. The left arm's sharp fingers tried to slice the spear.

Na, it was the inner spin. When the spear hit with the fingernails of the ogre, the ogre's left arm was forced inward. Sungmin got back the spear and changed his hand position.

And he swung it downwards. The spear struck the ogre's left knee. Even if it's skin was hard, there was always a weak point in the skin. The strike broke the bones of the tendon. The heavy body of the ogre moved slightly.

He took back the spear. His aura was swarming the spear. How long would it be before the knee was regenerated. Sungmin didn't care.

He moved to hunt the ogre. The cha was swung once more. Losing its balance, the ogre tried to swing his arm, but because his left leg couldn't support him, the arm only sliced air.

Crk! The spear broke through the ogre's right knees. Sungmin struck it very deep, so

the spear came through the other side of the knees. And he divided the spear in half

No matter how strong the regner would be, the ogre would try and take out the spear first. Sungmin took his halved spear and swung it around.

There was no laughing in the ogre's face now. The ogre first tried to remove the spear that was inside his knee. Sungmin's body disappeared from the vision of the ogre.

The ogre didn't see Sungmin, but Lude did. Outside the vision of the ogre, Sungmin moved left around the ogre. When the ogre tried to pull out the spear, Sungmin held up his spear.

Puck!

The spear struck through the armpit of the ogre. It went very, very deep. The spear came out through the shoulder of the ogre.

“CRKKKK!!”

The ogre screamed. It was a different scream than before. It would hurt. Even if it had regeneration powers, the pain was real. Sungmin quickly pulled out another spear from his pocket.

The ogre didn't regenerate its wound on its leg. It wasn't able to stand out. The spear in Sungmin's hand exploded. The spear string danced like it was crazy. The second step of the High Heavens shot out towards the ogre's body.

Bubububu! The strikes didn't break through the ogre's body, but it made his fall down backwards. The ogre tried flail its arms and resist, but it was so slow to Sungin... so slow.

He felt the cries of the cicada.

It was the cries that he felt in the Mountain of Mush.

He didn't want to be a cicada. He may have been a type that was waiting to go out to the world, but Sungmin didn't want to be a cicada. Living in the dark for ages, coming out, crying, then dying. He didn't want that.

Then what did Sungmin want. What did he want to be.

He didn't know.

Sungmin couldn't answer that just yet. Something other than a cicada. What was what. He wanted to surpass Wijihoyun, protect Sogo, see the end of martial arts.

He didn't know what was at the end. He didn't know if he could do it even if he spent his entire life on it. But there was one thing he knew. He couldn't die. He couldn't do anything if he died. He couldn't surpass Wijihoyun, protect Sogo, or see the end of martial arts.

Death was nothing. Sungmin knew. He already died before. At the end of death... it was be impossible to come back. There was only one life for humans, Sungmin was lucky, but there wouldn't be a next time.

So he didn't want any regrets.

He couldn't die here. Dying just by this monster. Wijihoyun would have easily killed this monster. Sogo would have as well. If he wanted to protect Sogo, he couldn't be weaker than her. If he wanted to go past, Wijihoyun, he had to go further than the limits.

A cicada couldn't do that. Sungmin wasn't one, however. He maybe have been a cicada in the mountain, but Sungmin was something else.

'I am.'

Sungmin moved towards the ogre. The ogre that fell down couldn't stand back up and was moving on the ground. Sungmin held the spear with a nonchalant face.

Sweep.

The spear was shot. The cha that was shot. The left eye. Then the right eye. He felt completely calm. It was strange even to him.

He wanted some gratification, but there was done. Instead of pleasure... it was more of a 'I should be able to do this.'

Lude looked at Sungmin through the silence. Sungmin held his spear tightly after taking away the vision of the ogre.

And then many times, many times, he swung it downwards. The ogre's neck. The skin was broken. The lips of the ogre was bloody. Sungmin moved towards the head of the ogre. Then he repeated the stabbing.

After a bit, the ogre's body didn't move. It died. The chimera that was meant to be the perfect ogre... died like that

"What... are you?"

Lude hesitated and asked. Sungmin pulled out the spear and answered

"I'm a person."

"Are you joking?"

"That's true."

Sungmin bitterly smiled and answered. Sungmin said looking at Lude.

"Can you help me. I have to take the head... but I can't cut it with the spear."

"No, let's take the entire thing."

Lude spit out. He walked towards Sungmin and opened the bag.

"If it's a body of an ogre chimera, there's reason to take everything. We need to know what kind of crazy magician put an ogre chimera in the forest, too."

Lude put down the bag in front of the body. The body was sucked into the bag.

"I did pass the test, right?"

Sungmin asked. To that, Lude smiled.

"...Did you not hear me? The ogre chimera is like a twinhead. I need to see when I get back, but that was a twinhead type monster. There was no one that caught a twinhead for their test. You... would get a S rank, but maybe even an SS rank.

Sungmin laughed at what Lude said. It felt good that his skill was being shown off. The training at the Mountain of Mush was paying off.

“What crazy person let this loose out here?”

Lude muttered. Sungmin had a feeling. The dungeon of the black magician. He didn't know where the exact location of it was. If he did, he would check it out.

But in half a year, the dungeon of a black magician was found out. The ogre chimera that was found outside the castle wall. There were many magicians that did the chimera experience, but for something like this, a black magician would fit the type.

‘But when I lived, there was no news of the guild catching a orge chimera.’

The guild may have ignored the mission in his past life. But if he did, the ogre chimera would have invaded the village. Sungmin wrinkled his face and tried to remember.

“What are you doing? Let's go back.”

Lude tapped Sungmin's shoulder.

“Ok.”

He nodded.

Chapter 48

Ogres (5)

"Chimera?"

Baron's eyes widened hearing the report. Rudy carefully explained to Baron what kind of things occurred in the forest that day. As he heard the story Baron examined Lee Sungmin.

Even though he subjugated a ogre chimera single-handedly, Lee Sungmin body didn't show sign of a single injury.

To be honest, Baron didn't thought it was possible for Lee Sungmin to subjugate a ogre by himself. Even as a so called no class expert. Even if his talent was genuine, he thought he would be lacking in an actual battle.

That is why Rudy was sent together. But according to the story he heard Rudy didn't interfere, could Lee Sungmin have subjugated an ogre chimera alone? Baron, gazing at Lee Sungmin face, opened his mouth,

"...I was wrong about you."

"Huh?"

Baron's surprising words made Lee Sungmin tilt his head. Baron rubbed his nose with his hand while frowning his forehead.

"Originally, after you came back from the ogre subjugation, i intended to give you a S-Rank. But since it is a ogre chimera..."

"There shouldn't be any problem raising it to SS-Rank, right?"

Rudy, who was listening, gave his opinion. At that words Baron let out a sigh while saying,

"I can't grant a SS-Rank so easily."

"Subjugating a ogre chimera single-handedly should be enough to receive a SS-Rank."

"This isn't a matter i can decide on my own."

Baron took a glance at Lee sungmin as he said so.

"Of course the results themselves are sufficient to be given a SS-Rank. However, it is unprecedented to be appointed as a SS-Rank as soon as you join the mercenary guild. So, the matter of granting a SS-Rank, isn't something i can decide on my own."

"I don't mind."

Lee Sungmin opened his mouth,

"I expected to be assigned a S-Rank from the start so i don't have any complaints. It won't be a problem raising my rank with the achievements i will accumulate from now on."

"Thank you for understanding."

Baron bowed his head. Upon becoming a SS-Rank one can receive a lot of benefits, but few could see the hardwork necessary to reach the SS-Rank. It was necessary a lot of accomplishments to raise one's mercenary rank and Lee Sungmin too knew that. Despite an ogre chimera being a strong monster this sort of instant rise to SS-Rank is a sight Baron seldom see.

"If it is like that for now let's raise it to S-Rank as planned. And then maybe..."

Baron nodded his head after hesitating for a second.

"As Rudy said, subjugating a ogre chimera is worth enough merits to ascend to SS-Rank. It is just that because of many small reasons i can't upgrade your rank in the moment."

"I know."

"I feel sorry that is the case. Since it is like that... I know! You don't have a place to stay, right? Although we have lodgings in the 4th floor, that itself has many downsides. In that case, I am gonna present you a house."

"Excuse me?"

"It is a one story. Opportunely this one is currently empty."

"Opportunely? it is just that no one else wants to touch that useless property you are responsible for."

Rudy provocative remarks sent Baron in a coughing fit.

"Why are saying unnecessary things?"

"I just wanted to bring it up."

"You!"

Baron once again coughed and looked at Lee Sungmin,

"Cough... It is a pretty good house. A good location. Even though it is said it can't be sold, if you consider the current prices, it would be quite expensive... But you can use it if you like.

"Thank you."

Lee Sungmin didn't have the kind of personality who refused to accept favors. And that too right when he was thinking he needed a house. Even though the mercenary guild's lodgings aren't bad it would be good to have some private training space.

"Don't tell me you will take part of the reward as payment for the house?"

"Do i look like a person who lacks common sense?"

Rudy words destroyed Baron's noble image. Baron opened his desk drawer.

"The reward the villages presented for the ogre subjugation was 30 Million Eerie. Originally a commission for a monster like a ogre should be at least 40 million... Fortunately the request was accepted given our need to verify your skills. Normally, i would have ignored it.

It was just like Lee Sungmin thought. That is why he didn't recall hearing any story featuring a ogre chimera in his past life. It seems like in his previous life the commission

for a ogre submission was ignored.

"As A S-Rank mercenary the guild will be taking a 10% fee from the reward... And to Rudy..."

"I am okay with not getting anything. I didn't do anything in the end. Just take it as me watching a good spectacle."

Rudy laughed while waving his hand. In that case Lee Sungmin reward amounted to 27 millions Erie. Baron readily gave Lee Sungmin a cheque in that value.

"You can use this cheque anywhere in Eria. Despite that don't carry it while wandering around. It would be easier to deposit it in a bank and make a card."

"Thank you."

Looking down at the check Lee Sungmin felt some complicated emotions. This is an unrealistic amount. 27 million Erie. Lee Sungmin saw many commissions worth 1 million Erie in his time as a C-Rank mercenary. Despite that he never accepted that sort of request. There were too many mercenaries and too few requests. There were a lot of C-Ranks mercenaries in the company Lee Sungmin belonged to. That being the case he never could receive one of those.

And commissions aren't always easy and comfortable. Therefore all his earned money was wasted drinking alcohol and buying women.

There was a time where he thought about raising money. Collect money, practice better martial skills and learn magic. Hoping: 'Can i not change my circumstances if i do so?'. Of course, that didn't happen in the end. Savings? Conservation? Those things weren't part of a mercenary lifestyle.

'The money i worked hard for years... A S-Rank could receive in one time!'

Even though this was surreal this was reality. Lee Sungmin put the check he received inside his inner chest pocket.

"The mansion Location..."

"If you can draw a rough map i will find it."

"...Will that be okay? The path is long and pretty complicated. Behengeru isn't small."

"It is all right."

This is the city he lived the longest in his past live. It almost didn't change, he can find it with a simple map. Baron scratched his cheek, pulled a pen and paper, and not long later passed over a rough map drawing to Lee Sungmin.

"Here it is. Those are the Keys."

Lee Sungmin received the keys and map from Baron and got out of the room. Baron moved his sight from the closed door and shifted it in Rudy direction.

"How was it?"

"I believe it is better to see with one's own eyes rather than saying."

"Then show me."

With that words Lude pulled his chair and sat in front of Baron. Baron took the staff placed in his back and, while moving his lips slightly, stretched his other hand laying it a top Rudy head.

"...Ugh."

Baron, who was looking through Rudy memories, let scape a small groan. Letting down the staff he was holding he let out a sigh.

"Certainly. His hability doesn't belong to the S-Rank."

"Didn't i say that? It would be better to just raise him to SS-Rank."

"I am gonna make a suggestion."

Baron replied. Even though he was Behengeru's mercenary guild current branch manager Baron isn't the highest authority here. There are a lot of mercenaries on Behengeru. A guild branch manager has the role of managing and not ruling over them, on contrary, the influence of the heads of some mercenary groups might surpass Baron's as a branch manager.

"Xeon is going to be eager!"

Baron Mumbled in a small voice.

The house Baron handed out to Lee Sungmin was too big for someone living alone. It was a house with a spacious first floor, high walls, and it wasn't as far away from the mercenary guild as it was described. After unlocking the gate with his keys the first thing that caught Lee Sungmin's attention upon entering was the frontal garden.

Even though it it wasn't receiving the correct management and the weeds were overgrown Lee Sungmin didn't mind. It wasn't a problem for him wheter the weeds continued to grow. After all, Lee Sungmin had no intention of managing a garden.

'It is really big.'

It was his first time living in this sort of house. Many things as a S-Rank didn't feel real. But he would get used to it soon.

Even though it was a little bit too open, Lee Sungmin felt satisfied with the emergence of a personal space. If everything goes well here was where he would practice his spear techniques everyday in the future. But, before that, Lee Sungmin opened his interdimensional pocket.

The spare spear he used to carry was most likely going to have to be discarded after the ogre subjugation this time. It was not a big loss. The only reason Lee Sungmin could afford to use that spear was exactly because it was an inferior weapon who could be easily obtained anywhere.

'Fortunately i received some money.'

For the time being there was nothing else requiring his money. Although he had thought about using his hard earned money to purchase potions and martial arts, he didn't have enough to buy a potion. Nor was he willing to purchase martial arts. He still hadn't trained Endless Nine Skies and Amethyst Cloud to an acceptable level. Spear techniques, cultivation techniques, movement techniques. It isn't right to desire other techniques when the most important is focusing on the 3 skills he currently owns.

"Neville."

Lee Sungmin quietly called out to Neville. And like that Neville's body emerged from Lee Sungmin shadow. Neville greeted Lee Sungmin while nodding his head slightly,

"How may i help you?"

"I need a weapon."

"Do you want to buy one? Or have one crafted instead?"

"Which one is better?"

Lee Sungmin gritted his teeth. To that words Neville replied while smiling beamingly,

"Each one has it pros and cons. If you want to purchase you can get the best goods with the correct price. But would it suit you? To use a weapon it should feel correct in your hands. A good weapon that doesn't feel right in your hand will inevitably not be appropriate."

"In that case let's try the crafting option first."

"How much budget do you possess?"

"27 Million Erie."

"Not that much."

Neville replied. That words sent Lee Sungmin mind reeling. 27 millions Erie were not even worth being mentioned.

"Our brokered blacksmiths are all the most skilled available. Therefore the prices have no choice but be expensive."

"Is there no way to adjust that?"

"That is not difficult. You can lower you sight a little, or instead... You can put aside your pride."

"...Pride?"

Neville words made Lee Sungmin tilt his head. Neville laughed as he said,

"Aren't artisans like that? Stubborn and with strong pride. Therefore there are many who have rash personalities. Like i said before, the blacksmiths we mediate are all the one possessing the most skill... But skill isn't proportional to character."

"That is not an issue as long as their skills are real."

"Please wait a moment."

Finishing saying that Neville disappeared inside Lee Sungmin's shadow. Even though the money he received was completely used he didn't regret it.

Although Lee Sungmin also wielded the spear in his past life the ones he used in his former days were inferior weapons. As a C Rank mercenary his weapons were always like that. Thinking: 'Be it good or bad weapons there was no problem if all you had you do was stab someone a couple times with it'. He ended spending the money that should be used upgrading and maintaining his weapons, thinking it was more profitable using it on better drinks or embracing more expensive women.

But it was different now. He would fulfill that old desire.

The desire of holding a good weapon for once.



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